

AN HEIR OF DREAMS



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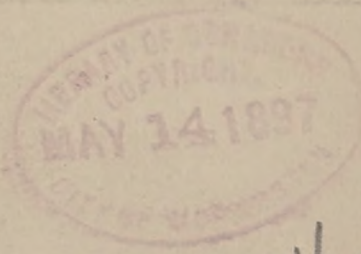
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.

AN HEIR OF DREAMS.

BY

SALLIE MARGARET O'MALLEY.

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AN HEIR OF DREAMS.

CHAPTER I.

'LIAS HAS A DREAM.

'LIAS the lazy, 'Lias the good-for-nothing, and 'Lias the dreamer, was dozing over a slice of bread.

It was an effort for him to eat when the sun shone as it did to-day, and the sky was full of a languorous haze, and the air sweet as the Chickasaw plum-tree blossoms could make it.

Vaguely he thought of his mother saying, " 'Lias, when you eat your bread and butter, get into the garden and weed the onion bed.

When I was young like you, I had to do all work like that, and me a girl, too ! Or if I shirked it, I got switched. That union bed is a disgrace to us. Don't leave it unfinished, as you always do everything."

But the old stone step was warm and sunny ; the bees droning in the plum blossoms hummed a lullaby. The bread fell from the swaying hand, his head slipped over against the door-step, and 'Lias slept the sleep of the just and lazy.

'Lias' mother brushed her skirts across his face as she went on her way after spring salad in the young wheat.

She poised her knife, and said, " Well, let him sleep. He is surely the stupidest child, but he hain't bad, and he *is* always meaning to do well."

'Lias' dog lay down at the boy's feet, and with an occasional snap at flies and gnats, or an exploring bee, he, too, fell asleep.

It was all in a little country town, with curious streets up hill and down hill ; with steps that led up to steps that led down ; where nature and craft had hung together, and wild plum-trees bloomed behind the main grocery, and the witnesses at court hitched their horses to scrub oaks in the court-house square.

The town had been asleep for many a year. When the school-bell on the gray-roofed academy began to ring on the first Monday in September every inhabitant in the town paused to hear, saying, " School's begun."

'Lias hated school. He would leave home early and arrive at school late, having stopped to see the caterpillars, a dusty grasshopper, or to listen to the blackbirds or crows.

Then his teacher gave him tasks he never finished. One day he was made to stand up and given a slate until he wrote a certain task forty times.

“Now write,” said the disciplinarian,
“‘I am lazy.’”

“You are lazy, you are lazy,” wrote
'Lias over and over, and when a severer
punishment followed, he never knew why.

He didn't care to read either, but sometimes he liked to hear his sister read her jingles out of Mother Goose, or maybe he fell to pondering over the queer little pictures that bobbed about so unlooked for.

His sister would point her finger at him and say,

“‘Come, let's to bed,’ says Sleepy-head.

‘Tarry awhile,’ says Slow,”

and so on through the ill-mannered reference to gluttony, for 'Lias liked good victuals “overly well,” as his father had said.

'Lias slept on and on that April morning, and the weeds shouted for him ; he heard them, and his mother was sailing over the tree-tops with a bundle of switches.

Suddenly he awakened to a sense of company. A long, lithe fellow, with a merry, wrinkled countenance was very actively jumping backward and forward over old Turk.

“Who are you?” asked 'Lias slowly—he always was slow in every way.

The fellow jumped ahead breathlessly. “I'm ‘Jack-be-Nimble, Jack-be-Quick, Jack-Jump-over-the-Candlestick,’ ” he said between leaps.

“What makes you do that this warm day?”

“My candle burned out and I grew fat, so I took to jumping everything I came across.” And away he went again.

“Does it make you lean?” asked 'Lias, who had a roll of fat around his waist and didn't like it.

“Don't it?” replied Jack, holding up a whipcord leg. “How's that for constitutional treatment?”

“Dear me!” mused 'Lias. “Were you ever fat?”

“Fat? Fat as your grandmother.”

Now 'Lias' grandmother weighed over two hundred pounds.

“Don't you ever get tired?”

“Dear me! no. It makes me tired to rest.”

“That's funny,” pondered 'Lias, thinking he ached sometimes from being quiet in school hours.

“Turk will wake up directly,” remarked 'Lias, “just to hear Jack-of-many-names talk.”

“When he stands up I'll show you how I can jump,” answered the queer, active creature. “My gracious self!” cried Jack suddenly; “I forgot my business.” He stopped jumping, and hopped about restlessly. “You're a very smart boy, 'Lias, but you're rusting here; the queen wants to know

something about you. I've got a bit of work here for you, too. Everybody whom the queen wants must finish some piece of work before she gives them a place in her kingdom."

"Who is your queen?" asked 'Lias.

"Why, Mother Goose, of course," answered Jack, looking astonished.

"Oh!" gasped 'Lias at this queer reply.

"Now here's something she thinks in your line. Here are some plants from Mary's garden—'Mary, Mary, quite contrary,' you know. She neglected her garden, and if you succeed in making a neat show, your fortune's made."

"I'm sure," stammered 'Lias, "that I should like to try, but I never did any gardening."

"What!" exclaimed Jack. "Then you'll never learn earlier. All our great men begin in the soil. 'Dig and delve,' that's a

motto for you. I myself used to render sheep's fat ; that's not nice as gardening."

"I ain't very well, anyhow," murmured 'Lias. "Mother was sayin' yesterday that I needed a tonic."

Jack looked at him critically. "You need air and exercise," he pronounced. "What's healthier than working among plants ? Besides the pleasure——"

"But I've got to go to school soon as I get well," excused the perplexed boy.

"To think of it !" stormed his tormentor. "Pray, while you're getting well increase your muscle, bring out your chest, draw in your chin, so ; and a light hoe, a few herbs, and there you are healthy."

"I'll think of it," said 'Lias.

"I am afraid you won't do." Jack shook his head and jumped over a bunch of marigolds and back again before 'Lias.

"Come, now," he said, "look at these

bulbs. Here's a plant that grows salad—cold salad, ready for the table." ('Lias was very fond of salads.) "And here's a seed of sweet pickles, and here's a dozen or more plants of strawberry jelly. Here's sage, it's a wise plant. Don't say no; and if you make half of these grow the queen will give you a secret that will open all doors of wisdom and wealth to you."

Now 'Lias was very wise about some things; he had always wanted money. First, to buy candy; then to have some of his own. Bill Jones, a schoolmate, had a dollar. Sometimes when his mother, whom he loved and who was poor, wished for a new dress or a package of coffee, 'Lias would crawl into a drowsy corner and dream about being a man with a mustache a foot long, and earning a thousand dollars a day. Sometimes he went forth, in his dreams, and dug up a box that was filled with dia-

monds and old coins, worth fabulous sums ; these he brought and dutifully laid at the feet of his mother.

If his mother grew angry, and said, " You hain't worth powder to blow you away ! Get up and help me out with this tub of water, 'Lias, you good-for-nothing thing !" he would amble obediently by her side, slopping the water up and out with his awkward movements.

" See now, you lazy child."

" I'll be good," he would answer humbly, as he saw her eyes blazing.

So when Jack spoke of wealth he caught 'Lias' ear.

" Could I have plenty of money ?"

Jack jumped nimbly over the grass for a minute, and brought back several dimes and quarters. " See !" he said, with an attitude.

" Where'd you get these ?" 'Lias put his hands out.

“Why, I delved, I planted, and reaped.”

“In that time?”

“Of course you couldn't be as expert as I am all at once,” amended Jack.

'Lias got upon his feet.

“You're *fat*!” said Jack with emphasis.

'Lias blushed. “I've been thinkin' of dietin' to get rid of it.”

“Let's jump,” said Jack. “It will do it. Three to one you can't stand and clear Turk. One, two, three!”

“I can't jump,” stammered the boy.

“Four letters to spell 'can't,' and three letters spell 'can.' I guess your pa let the trees grow when he was a-bringin' you up.”

“I've been whipped once or twice,” admitted 'Lias.

Jack twirled about on one leg, and snapped his fingers. “Once or twice! I

was whipped for eating, for being quiet, for being noisy, for talking, for not speaking when spoken to. Discipline is the thing you need. Say"—he made a sudden jump and buttonholed 'Lias—"what have you got to do to-day?"

"Why, I've got to weed the onion bed!" exclaimed 'Lias, glad to be rid of such an energetic friend at any cost. "Here I've been a-foolin' my time, and mother said she'd switch me if I didn't finish it."

Jack laughed. "Where's your mother's switches?"

"She just sailed over the trees with some awhile ago."

"Dear me!" Jack looked serious. "Your mother must be quite clever. She hain't like you, is she?"

"I'm going to that onion bed," answered 'Lias, moving off with more energy than he had ever used in moving about.

“ Say,” called Jack after him, “ I’ll leave these plants right here.”

“ I’ll try them,” answered the boy, looking back.

“ And say,” insisted the hopping creature, “ I’ll see you again ; I’ll keep an eye upon you.”

’Lias was just pulling up the first rag-weed when slap came some stinging thing across his shoulders.

“ Ouch !” he screamed, and jumped off the door-step upon poor Turk, who howled dismally.

“ Where’s that onion bed ? where’s them weeds ?” screamed his angry mother.

’Lias rubbed his eyes. The morning was well along, and the dust was on the weeds where dew had been when he fell asleep.

“ Mother, don’t whip me ! I’m going ! I fell asleep, and Jack was talking to me.”

“ I wish Jack Hahn would stay at home !”

exclaimed the good woman. "If he'd let you be you might amount to somethin'." She was glad to find even so small an excuse as her neighbor's son to hang some of the faults of her hopeful upon.

'Lias went at the onion bed with a will, stopping now and then to try a jump over the tall green tops, feeling carefully about his ribs after each jump.

"I ain't sure but it is a-doin' good," he reflected.

He had finished five rows when along came five girls from the public school. One was his sister, another was a freckled, lank girl he detested, two were the teases of the playground, and the fifth was the angel in blue calico and carpet matting hat who 'Lias adored, in a blind, inexpressible fashion all his own.

His sister put her face against the crack in the fence. "Mary, Mary, quite contrary,

how does your garden grow, with silver bells and cockle shells, and pretty maids in a row ?”

’Lias started ; so Jack-be-Nimble had said.

“ Get along !” he said with brotherly affection, throwing an uprooted weed at her. His face was red, but he bent to his task with quiet oblivion as far as the other girls were concerned.

“ Hain’t ’Lias gettin’ fat ?” said the lank one.

“ He don’t eat anything at all,” said his sister ; “ he just gobbles.”

“ *Well*, he shows it,” chimed in the teases.

He waited to hear the fifth comment, but none came, and ’Lias felt a glow about his heart, and thought certain he was overworking himself. He couldn’t resist looking at the charmer. She had her head side-

ways, with her forefinger in her mouth ; there was a critical look in her eyes and a smile of suppressed force upon her lips.

That was the straw on 'Lias' camel's back. He gathered his hat full of clods, and while there was a whisking blue frock in sight he did his best in aiming and in hitting where he aimed. He expected to hear of it, and so went sullenly back to his onion bed with thoughts at random and mechanical hand.

"Well, I'll be switched!" he cried. "*I have finished that.*"

He felt light, and jumping over the rake and a water-can, he made for the house, with Turk after him.

"Mother, I'm through!" he cried.

"No, you hain't ; you never finished anything in your life, onless it was your dinner."

"Come and see," he insisted.

After a little grumbling she started, secretly hoping he had finished it all right.

'Lias showed her the bed, with a dramatic flourish.

His mother looked at it, a smile slowly spreading over her face.

She fumbled in her pocket and put on her spectacles ; she looked critically along the rows.

“ Nary a weed ! ” she cried cheerfully, “ nor an onion tramped on. Here ’ ’ —she gave him a worn-looking nickel — “ now you do all I tell you to do that way, and we won’t have any more ‘ ouchs ’ ! ”

'Lias stretched himself beside her as they walked down the path between the tomato plants. He remembered Jack’s advice ; he drew in his chin and threw out his chest.

“ I b’lieve them beans are needin’ work, ” he remarked airily.

“ So they are, so they are ! ” cried his

mother. "You can do that this afternoon, an' after the sun gets cooler you can carry the butter to the grocery."

'Lias sank together, and his chin fell.

"What's wrong?" inquired his mother.

"That old feelin' in my breast. I b'lieve my heart's out of fix. I felt all burnin' around it while I was over them onions."

"That's strange, your bein' so onhealthy," mused the fond mother. "I'll give you a dose of rhubarb to-night."

She lowered her voice. "Maybe you'd better say nothin' about that bit o' money. Marilly would be a-tearin' up the whole garden in no time." The good woman laughed silently.

'Lias put his hand over the money.

"Jack was right," he thought. "'Dig and delve' will make you money. I don't mind if I do see him again."

Just before he went in he tried a leap

over Turk's back. He caught his toes and rolled into his mother's washtubs with a great clatter.

“What's in that boy?” thought she;
“throwin' mud at the girls and hurtin'
Turk. I declare he must go to school.”

CHAPTER II.

'LIAS FAILS TO SEE JACK.

How 'Lias lived to clean the bean rows and to carry the butter to the grocery was a wonder to him. Sometimes his throat seemed closed, and wild visions of having fits came to him.

“This heat is awful!” He rested on the hoe and looked down the long street that led to the depot. He saw the children playing hop-sotch, and felt how much pleasanter it was to play in the shade of the old elm growing in the school-ground than hoeing beans in the hot sun.

Some one tapped against the window.

“Hurry up, 'Lias,” called his mother;
“I'm packing the butter.”

He began again. His shoulders ached and his hands were blistered.

“If I get through this I’ll go to school next week,” he resolved.

His mother came out presently with the tin bucket neatly wrapped in a spotless white napkin.

“Don’t tarry on the road. The butter is firm now, an’ I’m anxious for it to reach Mr. Mills right away.”

’Lias stepped away in his usual slouching gait. His mother looked worried ; she saw Father White, the village rector, coming down the street.

“Walk faster, dear,” she said softly, “and I’ll bake you a little pie for supper.”

Now these “little pies” were ’Lias’ especial fancy. They were about the size of a coffee saucer, and it was his custom to devour them quickly, before his sister asked for any. He was a very selfish boy.

If he had looked behind him he would have travelled faster, for pies or money or candy could not have the power to move him that Father White had.

But he did not see him. The priest's light step did not reach his ears. He was thinking over his conversation with Jack-be-Nimble. The conversation seemed real, and he felt inclined to look after the bulbs that Jack had bestowed upon him.

"I guess I'll get a chance yet to see what the queen wants," he murmured.

A light touch fell upon his shoulder. He looked about, his face flushed, but he pulled off his hat and said huskily :

"Good-evenin', Father."

"Good-afternoon, my boy. Why are you out of school?"

"I hain't been well," said 'Lias.

Father White smiled. The plump figure

and rosy countenance seemed poor certificates of bad health.

“I’m well now, but mother needs me.”
‘Lias understood the Father’s smile.

“I suppose you’re a great help to your mother?” continued the priest.

‘Lias thought over this. “I weeded the onion bed and hoed the bean rows to-day; but—I feel awful sick when I work in the sun. I’ve got some trouble in my chest.” He put his hand upon his shirt front very pathetically.

“But you ought to get along in your studies. You’re growing to be a great boy, and I dare say now you couldn’t tell me what form of government we live under, could you?”

“Oh, yes, Father,” said the boy.

“Well, and what is it?”

“Chaos, Father,” was the firm answer.

“What?” cried the astonished priest.

“Here it is, right here, Father,” and 'Lias tore off a corner of the paper that protruded from under the napkin. It was a part of an editorial in the *Weekly View*. The boy put his finger on a line, and the perplexed priest read, “*The Government in its present form is chaos.*”

“See, Father,” said 'Lias persuasively.

Father White studied the boy earnestly; he tilted the round head back and said, “My son, you're a very stupid boy, or a very naughty one.”

'Lias rubbed his eyes and commenced to whimper.

“That's the way for babies!” cried the priest impatiently. “Tell me, why are you never up for instructions?”

The boy looked about vaguely. He tilted on one foot, and then tried the other.

“Why?” insisted Father White.

“Well, it’s first one thing and then another, Father.”

“Now promise me one thing, that you will be at the chapel Sunday at half-past eight. There’s a class up for instruction, and you must come.”

“I will, Father,” said *'Lias* earnestly.

The priest turned to go. A look on the face turned upon him was pathetic. There were dirty rings about the eyes and a suspicious redness of the lids.

Father White took a begrimed hand in his own.

“Tell me,” he said—“tell a lonely old priest that’s just worrying over you what you’ve been crying about.”

'Lias broke forth afresh, and as the priest had one hand and the butter the other, the clear tears dripped and flowed across his ruddy cheeks and fell to the grass along the street.

“ I’m stupid, I’m lazy. Everybody says so. I don’t like to work when it’s so hot. I don’t know fractions, and I can’t remember nothin’. I’m always bad, and how can I come to church ?”

“ Now, now,” consoled Father White. “ See what a lovely spring day, and now you’re almost done your tasks you’ll have time to think of something I’m going to tell you. What will you do when you are grown up like—like Mayor Mann ?”

“ That’s a long time away, Father,” murmured the boy.

“ No. How old are you ? Thirteen ; then five years more will find you either a good young man or a bad and wicked one. Who will support you then ? Surely not your old mother, whom you could help even now. If you are idle, then you will drift about a vagabond, a tramp, a heartbreak to your mother, a disgrace to me, and a prey for the evil one.”

“Oh, Father!” cried 'Lias.

“Learn now to do all your little duties carefully. Look at your mother's work, see if you cannot help carry a bucket of water or rub a few clothes. The sin of sloth will soon disappear. Now here is my street.”

'Lias raised his cap, and the priest turned away.

“Say,” he called after the boy, “would you like to earn a dime every day?”

The child's eyes glistened. Father White needed no other answer.

“Come up at seven o'clock in the morning, and I will show you how to feed and water my horse.”

'Lias walked off nimbly. He had a sense of responsibility.

“I owe that Jack something,” he thought; “he's brought me luck.”

He reached the grocery safely, and after the grocerman attended to his needs he gave

'Lias three or four bits of candy—something very unusual.

The boy's eyes shone, but with characteristic slowness he went out without thanking the man.

Mr. Mills put up his candy jar, thinking on the lack of politeness some young Americans evidenced, when the door flew open and 'Lias stuck in his head.

"Say, Mr. Mills, thank you for that candy," and he was off again.

Mr. Mills laughed. "That boy is a stupid, sure," he said.

'Lias came home by way of the school, and, as he hoped, who should be coming out but the blue frock of the girl he especially admired.

"Say, Jennie," he called softly.

She turned her blue eyes on him and said reproachfully, "Hain't you ashamed to speak to me, 'Lias? See how you made me tear my apron."

'Lias hung his head and passed on. His feet grew heavy and his chin fell.

"There's no use in a fellow tryin' to be good here," he thought.

Jennie pattered on behind him.

"I got excused at half-past three," she remarked. "I've got to mind baby while mother bakes."

'Lias grunted an unintelligible answer.

"I've got so many books to carry, they *just* tire me," hinted Jennie; but it was lost on her hearer. He walked on clumsily.

"'Lias," called Jennie softly, "*do* carry my books."

He turned, his face glowing.

"Certainly! Was that what you meant?"

The little girl nodded.

"Say, I didn't hurt you to-day, did I? I didn't aim at *you*."

"No; but you hit Rosy Winn in the ear, and she says she can't hear good."

“I don’t care!” said ‘Lias ungallantly.

“But you ought. Teacher says a gentlemanly boy wouldn’t be guilty of such deeds, and I want you to be a gentleman; ‘sides you tore my apron.”

“How?” asked the bewildered boy.

“I ran because I was afraid you’d hit me, and I caught the apron on a nail in the paling. I guess mother’ll scold me.”

“I’ll tell her I done it,” answered ‘Lias tenderly. “I don’t mind gettin’ whipped.”

Jennie laughed. “Mother don’t whip me; she lectures.”

“Not even if you shirk work and lessons?” asked ‘Lias in amazement.

“I don’t shirk work,” said Jennie. “It’s wrong, and I like my lessons.”

“Where’s my class now?”

“They’re on the one hundredth page in arithmetic—that analysis page about carpets and rooms.”

'Lias groaned.

"I can't keep up with them," he said.

"Then if you are turned back you'll have to go with Sammy Whitehead and all the little boys. Teacher said yesterday she wasn't going to make any new classes."

"Jennie, I'm going to come, but I ain't going to study figgers."

"Your class in grammar is over in composition. They had a beautiful lesson to-day, and the teacher let the primary class give words for the higher class to make sentences out of."

"I never was much on that," confided 'Lias.

"I turn off here. Good-by, 'Lias."

"Good-by, Jennie." 'Lias walked on until he reached a fence-post.

"Say, Jennie, here's something belongs to you," called the boy.

Jennie paused. "What is it?" she asked.

“Come and see ; it's on the post.”

He commenced to trot, and Jennie found six small pieces of candy on the fence. 'Lias looked back ; she was looking after him with a happy face.

“Thank you,” she called. He waved his hand, and in a minute he was at home.

“What did you buy ?” asked his mother, after she had examined her purchases.

'Lias looked ashamed. “I forgot I had it.”

“You'll have it the longer,” laughed his mother.

“How fast the day is going !” remarked his sister, coming in from school. “I was kept in fifteen minutes about my arithmetic, mother.”

“I wish I could help you some at home, but I can't,” sighed her mother.

“I have one example to study out, and then I will be free.”

“What will you do then?” asked 'Lias with unusual interest.

“Why?” inquired his sister in return, surprised that 'Lias the stupid should ask questions at all.

“'Cause I want to tell you something.”

“I can hear it now,” said she eagerly.

“No; you get that example, and then come out on the step.”

He ambled away to his favorite seat, intent on his own thoughts of the morning, when his mother said :

“'Lias, I'm so tired this evening that I wish you'd bring me a bucket of water.”

There was a quaver in his mother's voice, as if she was afraid he would refuse. He sighed, but then the good Father's words came in his mind, and he turned, saying :

“If you'll just call me, mother, I'll get all the water.”

“Did you ever?” she cried to her daugh-

ter. "'Lias is that changed, just since this morning."

To be sure he spilled some water on her spotless floor, and stamped his feet on a favorite cat, but his mother swallowed the words that came, and said instead :

" You're a great help to-day, 'Lias."

He went on out to the step, and calling Turk, they settled down again, dreaming in the closing day.

To him the evening came with a sweetness he had never known before.

How white the plum-tree was in the gloom ! What a home sound the old wooden pump had when he had brought the bucket of water ! And there was old Star " mooing " at the draw-bars, her bell faintly tinkling. Inside the house he smelled the tea as it simmered for supper, and the odor of the coffee-cake his mother took pride in baking mixed in with the plum scent and the

daffodils, with their buff hoods shining in the grass.

“A great boy some day”—Father White had said so—and at work to support his mother and sister.

He began to make plans at once, but his slow way of arriving at conclusions did not prompt him to take the pail and milk the cows when he saw his mother walking wearily to the milking lot. Instead he put his head into his hands and dreamed and dreamed—impossible things. Thinking how he wished Jack and the candlestick were real things.

Presently his sister sat down by him. “I solved my example, and I have put my dishes on the table, and supper is all on waiting for mother to come in. Now you can tell me that something.”

’Lias turned about eagerly. “I’m a-going to work to-morrow. I’m going to feed and

water Father White's horse every morning at seven, and I'll get a dime every day."

"Oh!" exclaimed his sister. "But what made him take you? I'd think——" She stopped, as if a conclusion of the sentence might make trouble.

"He did though!" cried 'Lias proudly.

"What will you do with your money?"

"I don't know," answered the boy, "just yet. I guess I'll give you a nickel now and then."

"I'll be so glad. I need a bottle of ink now, and I can't ask mother, I know she's got to pay out so much."

'Lias put his hand over the nickel in his pocket. He could hardly make up his mind to give it to his sister, for he had resolved on buying Jennie a little present.

"Say," he said hurriedly, "don't ask me any questions, an' I'll give you a five-center."

“Only one?” answered his sister, with raised hand. “Did you steal it?”

“No!” screamed 'Lias. “Me steal!”

“Then I'll take it.” And as the money touched her palm, “Thank you.”

“Supper is ready,” called their mother.

“I'm so hungry, mother,” said 'Lias, “I could chew anything.”

“You're always hungry,” laughed his sister.

He noticed when the pies were passed in some quaint little blue plates, with pictures of Dublin upon them, that his sister and mother had a pie apiece, while he had two. His first thought was how nice they were, and then a notion of his selfishness crept into his thoughts. He cut the last pie in three pieces, and rising, he put a piece in each plate.

“That's fair,” he said, smiling.

“Something has come over 'Lias,” mur-

mured his mother, but she took the little squat cream jug and poured him an extra allowance over his pie.

Then there came the cooling evening, when the single lamp sent out a merry twinkle from the white, drawn curtain ; when the big jar of flowers under his father's portrait filled the room with perfume ; when his mother sat in her cane-seated rocker and darned the stockings.

Marily, his sister, swung in her chair, thumbing her book of *Mother Goose* :

“ See saw, Margery Daw,
Johnny shall have a new master ;
He shall have but a cent a day,
Because he can't work any faster.”

How the words hung in 'Lias' ears ! He moved about collecting his books. His mother watched him placidly.

“ It looks like somebody was going to school,” she said.

“If you don’t care,” answered ’Lias humbly, “I will be glad as ever I could be.

“Mother,” said ’Lias, as he opened the door to his little room, “will you wake me early? I want to go up to Father White’s.”

“Dear me,” cried the old lady in a flutter, “what is he going to do?”

Marilly told her, and her mother took off her spectacles to dry them.

“If ’Lias does grow up good I’ll be a happy woman.”

CHAPTER III.

'LIAS SPENDS ANOTHER BUSY DAY.

'LIAS did not need any one to wake him the next morning. For the first time in his life he saw the sun rise, and felt that he could not stay longer in bed.

He had a notion of how he could surprise his mother by having her fire ready. He slipped out very quietly, dressed himself, and just had a roaring fire in the stove when who should walk in but his mother with her milk and cups.

Her skirts were wet with dew, and her thin hands were blue with the chill air of an early spring morning.

She was surprised to see the fire, and said so as she hovered over the warmth.

“How early do you get out of bed, mother?”

“I try to get my milking over by half-past five, but I’m out of bed by five.”

“And Marilly and me sleep until half-past six, when you call us to breakfast.”

“It’s an old sayin’ that children need more sleep than old people,” answered his mother, smiling.

’Lias noted the chill fingers and the wet shoes.

“Do you like getting up early, mother?”

“Now you are askin’ close questions ; but to tell the truth, it needs all my work to bring me out of bed early these mornings. Some way I don’t sleep good in the fore part of the night, my knees hurt so.”

’Lias straightened up and caught sight of himself in the looking-glass above the wash sink. It gave him a pang. He did not look

like the other boys. He was fat and lumpy. His coat had all the dust and soil of yesterday upon it. One suspender was broken, and his shirt-collar was inside next to his neck. His hair was long enough to twist; the boys had told him so often, but he had never noticed it.

He picked up the water-pail and went to the pump.

"Here's water, mother," he called cheerfully.

"Why, this is a reg'lar treat," she answered.

He searched about for soap, and filling the bowl, he scoured himself thoroughly.

"Mother, how can I get my hair cut?"

"Why, I used to 'tend to it. But I've so much work to do now, that I don't know when I'll get time."

"If I hurry home from Father's will you show me how to help, so you can have time

this evening? And, mother, please give me my Sunday shirt."

"Child alive!" exclaimed the startled mother; "I never heard you talk so much in my life."

Presently breakfast was ready, and Marilly was called. She came down sleepily, rubbing her eyes to find 'Lias with coat and trousers brushed, his shoes shining, a white shirt on, and his hair plastered tightly behind his ears with vigorous brushings.

"What's the matter with 'Lias?" she asked in amazement.

'Lias pointed a fat forefinger at her and chanted:

"Zany, Zany, Zaddle Pate
Went to bed early,
And got up late."

"Well, *you* never could say that before," growled Marilly.

"Come, children, this morning is too pleas-

ant to me to have you quarrel. See what lovely eggs old Buff gave us for breakfast ; they're white as snow, and we've two apiece and a bit of toast. Then it will soon be time for 'Lias to be at Father White's."

"I think everything has an extra taste this morning, mother ; don't you ?"

"I've got a notion so ; but I haven't made out the reason."

"I know why 'Lias finds everything good," said Marilly.

"Why ?" asked her brother innocently.

"Because you washed your face," answered his sister sharply.

For a minute war was near, but by judicious side talking Mrs. Leveve brought back peace.

"What do you suppose we have in the hay-mow this mornin' ?"

The children could not guess, and she

said, "Old Domineck has five chicks, just out of the shell."

Marilly dropped her fork, and away she ran to see the newcomers. 'Lias came to his feet slowly, intending to see them, too. His mother held up a warning finger and looked at the clock.

"I'll be switched!" exclaimed 'Lias. "A quarter to seven."

He looked disconsolately at an egg and the firm, yellow butter, but finally he was off and walking at a fair pace.

"Look - a - here!" cried Jack Hahn to Johnny Dillon; "see old puddin'-legs a-travellin'. I'll bet there's somethin' good to eat at the other end o' the track."

"Let's foller him," said John eagerly.

They scuttled down the street, imitating 'Lias as he hurried on in his waddling way.

"Hello!" called Jack Hahn. "Your legs are runnin' away with you."

'Lias did not answer, but his face flushed when Dillon laughed.

“Take time, sonny,” said the latter pompously.

'Lias turned off into the long grass-grown street towards the Father's house.

“Where are you a-goin'?” cried Jack Hahn in surprise.

“I'm goin' to Father White's ; won't you go?” But they were gone. Beside being a little afraid of Father White, they were decidedly quarrelsome about their views of religion, and called the Catholic school-children “cat-lickers,” while the latter called them in return “pig-eaters” and “fire-eaters.”

“I see,” said 'Lias to himself, “that I must keep close watch or I shall fail somewhere in my promises to do better.”

Father White was standing on his doorstep, with one eye studying his plants and

the other on the lookout for 'Lias, for he said, as the boy turned the corner :

“ Oh, here you are ; and have you had breakfast ? Yes ? ”

He broke off a rosebud and handed it to 'Lias.

“ A few flowers make good companions, and give one healthy employment beside. ”

The boy thought of wonderful Jack-be-Nimble.

Suddenly he said to Father White, “ Father, do you have any faith in dreams ? ”

“ Oh, yes, my child ; the same faith I have when I'm awake, I'm sure. ”

“ I don't mean that, Father. Do you think dreams ever come true ? ”

The good priest looked at him with a quiz-zical smile.

“ You've been eating too much for supper, and have suffered the penalty. But—my horse has not breakfasted. ”

'Lias started ; he had allowed himself to fall to pondering over nothing right under Father White's eyes.

“ I'm ready, Father,” he said.

He was really afraid of the tall bay horse that turned his head from side to side to watch every movement the boy made.

The priest stood watching them a minute.

“ I think you'll do. Now be careful in leading him to his water-trough and do not frighten him, or he will break away from you and give us trouble.”

'Lias went on correctly enough. He took the halter and led the horse out of the stable to the well. As he tried to pump the animal thrust its nose impatiently against his arm, and the restless feet beat fiercely against the ground. 'Lias raised the halter's end and slapped the horse's nose ; he reared up, jerking the strap from the boy's hand, and started on a plunging run about the

priest's garden and yard. The boy ran frantically after him, but he saw the salad-bed, the onions, and the young tomato plants crushed down, and, to his horror, he saw that the horse had jarred open the gate that led to the Father's flower-beds.

Away went the tearing hoofs, and as soon as 'Lias could he ran around to head him off. He almost screamed when he saw the rare pink tea-rose uprooted and dangling from the bay's mouth.

"Hey, there!" cried a stern voice, and Father White ran out in great excitement. "What does this mean?" he asked 'Lias severely.

"He jerked away from me," answered he, with bent head.

The priest spoke to the horse quietly, at the same time approaching him. He caught the halter with a firm hand, and, leading the horse to the stable, fastened the door securely.

'Lias was still standing by the flower-beds. All his dreams were gone. He had been careless, had broken his promise, and now Father White would never let him help him again. He thought once of going away and not even saying one word of apology, then his eyes saw the poor torn rose-bush. He took his knife, removed all the broken branches, straightened out the roots, and with careful hands replaced it firmly in its former home.

He was not aware that the priest was watching him, until a kind voice exclaimed :

“ There, that has saved you. If you can do that so well and carefully, you can be of use.”

'Lias stood up and said tremblingly :

“ Father, I hit the horse on the nose. I forgot what you said.”

“ Ah ! 'Lias, these ‘ forgot’s ;’ if we could

just put them out of our lives, how much more perfect our lives would be !”

The boy looked up. Father White’s eyes were lifted to the deep blue of the western sky, and were filled with a look of pathetic earnestness.

“We all forget many things,” he continued, “and I shall not be too severe.” He laughed. “I shall punish you by insisting that you attend Mass.”

He went to the chapel, and ’Lias, after he had arranged some other torn plants, went reluctantly enough to Mass.

He was wanted again after that was over, and his new friend pointed out to him some plants he wanted removed to other beds. ’Lias listened attentively, and went about his work slowly and carefully.

It was nearly ’Lias’ dinner-time when the work was finished. He stood on the walk a minute, hesitating about telling the Father

he had completed his task, but finally ventured into his study, and said, "Is there anything more, Father?"

The priest looked at him kindly. "No, not to-day; but come to-morrow; a little earlier, if possible, would suit my horse's appetite better. I've been looking at you now and then as you bedded my plants, and I am pleased with you. To-day we will settle with this, and do not spend it foolishly." He laid a new, shining silver quarter of a dollar in 'Lias' hand.

"All this, Father?" he cried joyously.

"That is little enough," laughed the priest; "but you see I'm not rich."

'Lias returned home speedier than he went away in the morning, and, I am sorry to say, almost made himself sick by eating an enormous amount of victuals.

He felt stupid after, but it did not keep

him from asking his mother every five minutes :

“ Ain’t you glad I’m making money ?”

He called Turk after awhile, and together they strolled through the clover lot to a sunny place in a corner by the stables. 'Lias made believe to be hunting rats as busily as Turk, but it was not long before he was sound asleep, with Turk snuffing and growling under the stable-sill.

It was no wonder, then, that Jack-be-Nimble found him so easy, but he cried : “ I’m really tired trying to keep up with you. I’m so tired I can’t jump. I’ve got news for you. Our queen, who knows everything, has great hopes of you. She thinks you’d better turn your attention to finances altogether. We need a new financier in the kingdom.”

'Lias stared and asked, “ What is a fine—fine——?”

“Financier,” completed Jack. “It’s a man to look after our money, a real clever, thoroughly honest man. It’s quite a responsibility, I can tell you. I had control of it once, but fell under the queen’s displeasure by misplacing a sixpence. The books wouldn’t balance, and for awhile I was in great distress, and they had just sent for the chopper to chop off my head, when along came the crooked man who found the crooked sixpence, and it was the missing one, so, of course, my honor was vindicated; but really it’s a place for a person of more than ordinary capacity for thought.”

’Lias felt proud, and said so.

“Well, you may feel that way; but it’s an unanswered question to me whether the honor and profit pays one for so many weary years. Dear me! I must have been chief financier for fifty years.”

“Is the queen very rich?” asked 'Lias, feeling after his quarter.

“Dear me, yes,” cried Jack, beginning to grow restless in the absence of his usual exercise. “There’s all the eggs of gold that she recovered, and the rings the old woman wore at Banbury Cross, the crown that King Arthur wore when he made the famous pudding, and—well, really, I think I’m telling court secrets.” And he put his finger on his lip.

“But I shall have to know anyhow if I take care of it,” insisted the boy.

“That’s so,” said Jack thoughtfully. “But how do you like work? Isn’t it true that you can pick up money by being careful to keep your eyes open as you dig and delve?”

“I made a quarter to-day,” smiled 'Lias.

“Now that’s success. ‘Dig and delve,’ that’s a motto. There’s a fellow with us

now who has a heap of money because he picks up what other people drop. He even saved the courtesy that the maiden dropped on Primrose Hill. Oh, he *is* saving !”

“ I’m going to work for the Father to-morrow, too,” said ‘Lias.

“ See,” cried Jack, “ if I hadn’t a-set you to thinking about stirring around you wouldn’t be off the door-step yet. But stay !”—Jack struck another attitude—“ you’re not so fat. You’re growing thin.”

“ I *do* hope so,” answered the boy earnestly.

“ But that head,” resumed Jack sadly, “ that hair ! You must really journey over our way. We’ve got a barber there, a kind soul, who shaves pigs, and charges only a pinch of snuff. I dare say he’d fix your head in no time.”

“ Mother’s going to cut my hair,” answered ‘Lias.

“That’s prudent,” said the restless little man, “and saving. You won’t have to pay *her* anything.”

This sounded unpleasant to 'Lias, and he thought to himself, “I wish he’d go.”

“And so I will,” snapped Jack instantly. “I can hear what you think ; but I’ll see you later.”

The boy looked after him as he leaped over weeds and rails and stones, until a great leaf got in the way and he was lost sight of.

He thought a long time, but all the time somewhere near he heard low laughter and suppressed giggles. There was something awful crawling about his neck, but his hands would not obey him. He tried to call out, but no sound came. Nearer around to his ear came the awful, crawling thing. He made a great effort, and leaped back into wakefulness and every-day life, and there was Jack Hahn giggling on the fence.

“ I’ve been a-ticklin’ your neck an’ nose fur an hour,” he cried. “ You’re the queerest feller. I don’t know when I’ve laughed so.”

’Lias felt for his quarter ; it was gone. His face grew white, and he felt sick of disappointment.

“ Jack Hahn,” he cried hoarsely, “ you’ve stole my money !”

“ I never !” screamed Jack.

’Lias came closer. “ Give it to me ; you’ve got it.”

“ You just dare,” said Jack, “ to come a step nearer. Money ? Where’d you get money ?” he sneered.

’Lias paused. He had been a coward always at school, the boys said. He had been cuffed and laughed at until he was thoroughly cowed. He felt afraid Jack might hit him.

The other boy saw the look on his face.

“Coward!” he cried, and he picked up a piece of earth and flung it in 'Lias' face.

Jack could never tell why nor how, nor neither could 'Lias, but there were arms and legs and heads tangled for awhile, and when it was over two bloody noses and the private opinion of each that the other was whipped.

“Do you want more?” cried 'Lias.

“Ain't you got enough?” yelled Jack.

But there was a diversion here. Turk was trying to give 'Lias something he had in his mouth, and when the excited and trembling boy could hold out his hand, Turk dropped the quarter into it.

It came to 'Lias slowly: the fact that he was wrong, that he had accused a friend of stealing his money, and that that friend was innocent. Just as slowly the idea followed that he must make amends.

“Say,” he blurted out, “I oughtn't to

have said that. I'll give you some marbles to-morrow if you won't be mad."

Jack rubbed his nose and grinned.

"All right," he said ; "but, gee ! who'd a-thought you'd fight ?"

CHAPTER IV.

'LIAS MAKES A NEW ACQUAINTANCE.

'LIAS was not at all proud of his encounter with Jack Hahn ; instead he was heartily ashamed of it.

When his sister asked him how his face received so many scratches, and what made his eyes so swollen, he did not answer at all, and Marilly told Mrs. Leveve that 'Lias was sulking again. He felt degraded, and wanted to clear himself mentally and morally of some incubus that he could not name or explain. He simply felt as if some awful weight was upon him. He could not enjoy his supper, although his mother had a dish of the clearest honey, with slices of bread that were white and fine.

“Have you worked too hard to-day, 'Lias?” anxiously asked Mrs. Leveve. “It seems to me you're not hearty as usual.”

“I'm not sick. I just feel like I couldn't eat.”

“You ain't used to such hard work. It was extremely hot to-day. I see your eyes are puffed up.”

“I don't feel a bit sick,” insisted 'Lias.

“It don't do to try to do too much at once.”

“I've been asleep all afternoon, and then Jack Hahn and ——”

He paused, wishing he did not have that sentence commenced.

“I wish you wouldn't go with that boy,” complained Mrs. Leveve.

“We had a fight this afternoon,” blurted 'Lias.

“A fight!” gasped Mrs. Leveve.

“A fight!” cried Marilly. “Who whipped?”

“ I did,” answered the boy firmly.

“ O 'Lias, you've always been a trial, but I didn't think you'd go to fighting,” moaned his mother.

Then Marilly made him go over the proceedings of the afternoon, while she smiled gleefully over the recital.

“ I just had a notion you'd let a baby whip you, 'Lias.” She looked at him almost admiringly. “ I wonder if you could whip Pauly Venty ?”

“ He's bigger than I am,” the boy said.

“ He's not so heavy,” insisted Marilly.

“ Fighting's a disgrace,” quavered Mrs. Leveve.

“ A boy's got to fight sometimes.”

“ And a sin,” resumed the mother.

“ I don't like to fight, mother ; don't worry,” said 'Lias consolingly.

Marilly looked disappointed. “ I'd like you to whip Pauly. He said to-day that I

looked like a turkey egg, and said you was not worth your salt ; that you couldn't even feed Father White's horse."

A flash came into 'Lias' pale-blue eyes.

"Marilly, hush up!" exclaimed Mrs. Leveve. "I never saw such a girl, a-trying to make trouble between friends."

Marilly subsided, but kept up a running conversation of signals with 'Lias.

'Lias tried to avoid any conversation about the fight, and hunted around until he found a catalogue of plants, over which he spent an hour, asking his mother about roses, and telling her about Father White's plants.

"I've got some tea-roses," mused Mrs. Leveve, "but they need fixing up and pruning. I didn't know you cared for flowers, 'Lias."

"I do though."

When eight o'clock sounded from the old brass clock he picked up his belongings

and put them away neatly. His mother was dozing in her chair.

“Mother,” called 'Lias, “wake me, won't you, to start the fire?”

“You?” said Marilly.

“We're growing old enough to help mother. Father White says if we'd just do little things we'd soon learn how helpful we could be.”

Marilly looked thoughtful.

“I don't believe mother would let me help,” she said.

“Don't believe that,” returned 'Lias, as he closed his room door.

A slow rain set in through the night, the fore part of which had been so clear and beautiful. The steady rhythmic down-pour smoothed all care creases from 'Lias' forehead. Never before had he found the bed so comfortable nor the clean comforts and spreads so warm and inviting.

The great clock in his mother's room was striking. 'Lias raised his head. One, two, three, four, he counted.

"I can sleep an hour," he thought.
"Mother wants to be up at five."

He peered out the window; no sign of day, not even the faintest streak of dawn; but the rain was pouring down with a patter on walks, in barrels, and in the cistern.

"Ugh!" shivered 'Lias, burying himself in the covers.

It was not four, as he thought, but five o'clock, and already Mrs. Leveve was placing her kindling in the kitchen stove.

When she awakened at five, her first thought was to call her son when she heard the rain pouring down. She felt weak and stiff of joints, but old habits asserted themselves.

"Dear me! I might just as well go at it; I couldn't sleep," she thought.

'Lias did not awaken again until the dishes rattling brought to him some memory of work to do. He sprang from bed and rushed into the sitting-room to see the clock.

“Half-past six!” he cried. “Mother, why did you let me sleep?”

“It’s such a bad morning, and you can come right in and eat. You won’t be late.”

“Where’s Marilly?” 'Lias was half afraid she would be up.

“I haven’t called her. I’ll just wait on you, and let you get off to Father White’s.”

'Lias was too hurried to enjoy breakfast. He jerked on his coat, and picking up his hat, was off, leaving his mother calling about an umbrella.

If he walked quickly the morning before, he ran now, a steady, splashing gait that brought him to the priest’s house ten

minutes before seven. He took the key from the housekeeper in a business-like way, and she told him that Father White would be busy for some time, but that he ('Lias) was to come to the house in the afternoon.

'Lias was very careful this time. He arranged the hay as the priest had shown him, and put the corn and oats in their separate boxes. Then he took the bay out to the trough, and gave him his supply of water. As he led the prancing animal back he was astonished to hear a voice say :

“Hello ! how long have *you* been working here ?”

“I commenced yesterday,” answered 'Lias, wondering who the questioner could be.

“*Ain't* that horse a beauty ?” exclaimed the man with fervor.

“Yes, he is,” affirmed the boy.

“I’d think Father White would be afraid to ride such an animal, he bein’ kind of staid and old.”

“He knows Father White,” thought ‘Lias.

He led the horse on towards his stable, but for some reason, try as he might, he could not unclasp the catch at the door. The man was over the fence in an instant.

“I’ll open it,” he cried. “That horse a-prancin’ that way, of course you couldn’t open it.”

He went in the stable and stared about with curious eyes.

“That’s his saddle, I reckon, and bridle, an’ all hung right to hand, an’ neat as neat can be. An’ what a saddle! Fine? I just reckon.” He investigated further. “Road cart, top buggy. Lord! how some folks can have the fat of the land while beggars starve.” He shook his head and scowled.

“I reckon Father White locks all this up mighty securely. ’

“Of course,” answered ’Lias.

The man walked over and inspected the door fastening. He laughed loudly.

“Just what I expected—worse than no lock at all. I bet he uses one of those old flat keys.” He looked at ’Lias interrogatively.

“Here’s the key,” answered the boy.

“I must lock up now.”

“Lemme see ; I’ll lock the door,” said the stranger. He laughed again. “Yes, easy to open as falling off a log.”

He put his hand in his pocket and started towards the fence.

“Give me the key !” cried ’Lias.

“The key ?” The man looked astonished. “Why, did I put that key in my pocket ? How careless !” He pulled out a handful of keys and looked over them care-

fully. "There you are," he said at last. "It's nearly like some of my keys. I had to look sharp. Well, good-by--good-by. Maybe I'll see you again." He went away laughing.

'Lias knocked at the housekeeper's door and gave her the key.

"Will Father White need me for anything else this morning?" asked 'Lias.

"No; but be sure to come about two o'clock this afternoon."

"I will," answered the boy.

He saw the stranger far down the street as he came out of the priest's gate, and when he turned into the one running homeward he saw the man going in at his mother's gate.

He came out directly and walked rapidly towards the hollow that was given over to negro cabins and dense groves of swamp willow.

“Who was that man?” he asked his mother.

“Just a tramp,” answered she placidly.

“That’s queer,” thought ‘Lias.

He felt there was something to think out, but he could not manage it, and finally forgot all about it.

Up at the priest’s house the forenoon was drawing to a close when there came a sick call some miles out in the country.

Father White hastened to the stable after he had secured his key. Turn as he might and shake and rattle the clasp would not unlock.

“This is not my key to the stable,” he called to the housekeeper.

“It is the one the little boy gave me, Father,” answered the woman.

“I’ll get the one I keep in my desk,” said the priest. “It’s lucky I did that. I’m always afraid of losing the other or having it misplaced.”

He was soon ready, and said : " Tell my boy to wait for me if I'm not here before he comes."

'Lias came in early, and as the priest was absent he cut up some few weeds about the garden and tied up some vines lying on the ground.

He was busy quite awhile before he saw the priest coming up the street. He hastened to open the stable-door, that he might earn some word of praise.

" How did you happen to change keys this morning?" asked Father White. " A nice time you gave me to get Bay Joe out of the stable."

" I didn't change keys, Father," answered 'Lias.

The priest looked at him curiously.

" I know," muttered 'Lias ; " it was that man."

" What man?"

Slowly and by hard work, as he afterwards said, Father White drew out the story of the man who was so curious about the horse and his belongings.

“He kept my key, then, and gave you one of his own,” mused Father White.

“He said the key was so like some of his own, he couldn’t tell them apart, Father.”

The priest smiled. “I dare say,” was his comment. He studied awhile, then said: “’Lias, run ask your mother if you can stay all night with me. I may need you, and you will, no doubt, see that man again.”

Although he did not understand in the least, he went dutifully. His mother was quite excited over such an event as ’Lias being invited out for the night, and kept him a good half hour to change his clothes and to caution him how he should behave.

The priest had a bit of work laid out for

'Lias. The rain had made the garden ready for the cabbage plants and young tomatoes. 'Lias went about the work slowly, but Father White saw he was working conscientiously, and so left him to look after the business alone. The priest nailed up the outer door of the stable that opened into the alley, and 'Lias could not understand why Father White should send him to lead Bay Joe to a neighbor's stable for the night.

'Lias was astonished when he sat down to tea with the priest. Some dim perception of the epigram, "We eat to live, not live to eat," filtered into his brain. He wondered if the Father was very poor. 'Lias climbed up to the little room assigned him, and the housekeeper showed him that one of its doors opened into her room, if he felt afraid.

"I'm not afraid," answered 'Lias ; "but I feel chilly."

He missed the cheery fire his mother always kindled on cool evenings or in damp weather.

He lay awake for a long time, and it seemed to him he had not slept at all when Father White stood over him.

“Come with me,” he whispered.

'Lias drowsily obeyed, not realizing where he was.

“Shake yourself awake,” said the priest as they went down-stairs, “and make as little noise as possible.”

He blew the light out and opened the door cautiously. They kept in the shadow of fruit-trees, and as 'Lias gathered his scattered ideas he saw two men walking silent as cats behind them. It gave him a start, but Father White pressed his hand warningly.

They skirted the fence, and the two men placed themselves to the left of the door.

To his surprise 'Lias saw that the door was slightly opened.

The priest and the men seemed to be listening intently, and 'Lias listened also. He heard something moving in the stable, and presently a bump, followed by some words growled out in a savage undertone.

There was a long silence, then a match was scratched, and a faint glare of light came through the door. There was an exclamation of surprise.

Rapid footsteps sounded now, and a man dashed out. His arms were caught by the two men who were stationed at the door.

“Is this your man, Father White?” one of them asked, as he opened a lantern slide and turned the light upon the prisoner's face.

“Is this the man you saw this morning?” asked the priest of 'Lias.

"Yes, Father," answered the boy.

The man looked at him spitefully. "You hain't such a fool as you looks to be," he said, grinning.

"We'll not keep you up, Father," said one of the men laconically. "Good-night."

The other paused. "We will need you in the morning awhile. We may get some light on the many robberies going on for the year past," he added in a low tone.

Father White nodded. "I thought of that," he said.

If the priest slept that night 'Lias did not, and in the morning he felt sick and giddy.

Then he was up to give in his evidence, which he did clearly, though he was half frightened to death. As he walked home he found himself an object of much attention.

"That's him a-comin'," cried one boy, who had been used to fling mud and bad

words at him. "See how swollen his eyes are. I'll bet he had a hard time catchin' that robber."

"That's 'Lias Leveve," explained another boy to a youngster who was unknown to 'Lias. "He's been takin' care of things for the priest. Las' night he heard a noise at the stable, and there was a man leadin' out the priest's horse. 'Lias grabbed him and yelled, and the man tried to shoot him, but 'Lias caught his pistol hand, and some fellers heard and run in just in time to save him. I tell you he's game."

Veley, the cobbler, came out of his shop door wiping his hands on his leather apron. He was a wiry, nervous old man.

"Shake hands!" he cried to 'Lias, peering over his spectacles. "I kind a-thought you daft in time past, but I see you have got sand. You're brave, an' have done us a public good. I'm proud you b'long to Millville."

“ I hain’t done nothin’,” mumbled ’Lias.

“ True sign of greatness. A great man never blows about it. Go home ; I hear your mother’s almost insane.”

Earlier Mrs. Hahn had turned her blue-checked apron over her head and run breathlessly over to Mrs. Leveve.

“ Dear me !” she cried, “ I don’t believe in leavin’ people unprepared for bad news. Brace up, you poor woman ! ’Lias has been hurt bad, but he hain’t dead.”

When ’Lias reached home the air resounded with wailings, and he wondered why his mother hugged him so frantically.

“ And you’re alive ?” asked Mrs. Hahn disappointedly.

“ I hain’t no idea of dyin’,” declared ’Lias.

CHAPTER V.

'LIAS TRIES TO EXPLAIN CIRCUMSTANCES.

“WHERE did he hit you, dear?” sobbed Mrs. Leveve.

“Who hit me? I haven’t been hit.”

“You poor boy! and the only boy I’ve got, too,” she wailed, not hearing ’Lias at all.

“Mother, I tell you I haven’t been hurt, nor hurt anybody, nor there hain’t nothing wrong, ’cept I’m hungry enough to starve. I know I couldn’t be a priest; my health would go in no time.”

“Mrs. Hahn said you was killed,” sobbed Mrs. Leveve, looking at him cautiously.

“No,” corrected Mrs. Hahn; “I said he was hurt, but not dead.”

“ Well, I hain't hurt nor dead,” returned 'Lias.

Mrs. Leveve recovered rapidly.

“ I know you're hungry. Come right into the kitchen.”

She looked at Mrs. Hahn somewhat contemptuously.

“ Stay awhile, Marthy, I'll be in directly.”

“ No, I can't ; I left my breakfast dishes,” returned her neighbor, with a crimson face. “ I'm glad you are not hurt, 'Lias, I'm sure,” she said.

“ So am I, but I believe everybody's gone crazy.”

'Lias ate until he felt he could not safely eat any more.

“ Now I want to hear all about this talk,” said Mrs. Leveve.

'Lias went carefully over the events of the night and the previous morning.

“Now you see, mother, I did not do any great deed nor get hurt.”

“What scandalizers some people can be!” ruminated Mrs. Leveve. “To think I gave that villain one of my nicest coffee-cakes.”

“It won’t hurt him, mother.”

“I guess you’ll be going to school Monday, and not work for Father White?”

“I am going to school and work, too. I wouldn’t give either one up. I’ve got one sin, mother, I must get rid of or I can’t accomplish anything, and Father White keeps me stirred up. He says I can’t talk properly, and that as long as I am too lazy to study I will be called stupid. If my hands are soiled he makes me wash them, or if I am not neat any way, I know that I must make myself presentable before I can talk to him.”

“But *you’ve* always been so unhealthy. There’s your heart always a-troublin’ you.”

“I feel ever so much better than I ever felt before.” ’Lias laughed a little and added, “I think I was lazier than unhealthy, mother ; I never failed to eat.”

“That’s not always a sign of health, hearty appetites. Your grandmother took her six cups of coffee and four or five eggs, not to say anything about the biscuit and cake she’d eat each meal, yet she never had a well day.”

“No wonder,” laughed her son, as he thought of his grandmother’s width and weight.

“To-morrow I’m going into the class preparing for First Communion,” said ’Lias.

Mrs. Leveve sighed. “It’s best, I guess. I haven’t been in the chapel here for years, but I reckon if you get to stirrin’ round so as to help, that I’ll try to get back in my church again. Marilly’s set on taking lessons on the piano if the priest can have the

Sisters here, so I reckon it'll come out all right."

"What's the good of Marilly taking music lessons?" grumbled 'Lias.

"Oh, they're all sayin' how well she sings an' all, and Miss Blethins thinks her a real wonder; says she's so bright for her age; says she's equal to any of her age in the cities. Miss Blethins knows, for she's lived in the city always. I've seen her name on programmes, too, in the church societies. She sings mighty well."

"Music's good enough in its place," said 'Lias with an air; "but what we need is an actual living these times, and how to get it is the question."

"That's true," murmured his mother.

"I heard Father White talking to a farmer the other day, asking how he was doing, and if he was putting in any crop. The man said he intended planting nearly all his

little bit of land in onions and Irish potatoes ; that onions always sold well, and that there had been such poor potatoes raised for two years, that a good price might be expected this year, if one could raise good ones."

"Yes," murmured his mother as 'Lias paused ; "but what of that?"

"It's that clover lot of an acre and a half," smiled 'Lias ; "I want to put potatoes in it."

Mrs. Leveve held up her hands.

"What would I do with Star?"

"There's the grass in the pasture along the creek."

"It's so far to go to milk."

"I'll bring her to you nights, and take her out in the mornings."

She shook her head doubtfully.

"Just think, mother"—'Lias talked very seriously—"April is nearly over, and I had best get them out in the dark of the moon ;

that's what that farmer said to do. School's out first of June, and I'll be idle and stupid unless I have work to do. Father White says he's seen boys of my age support a small family, and I'm not going to be called a stupid, lazy boy any longer. I can soon make enough to pay for the ploughing of the ground, and I know I can keep the weeds out."

"We'll talk it over." Mrs. Leveve picked up her cup towel. "I'll have to see the profit in it before I touch that clover field."

It was only a question of a few days until she came to think as her son wished her to, and if 'Lias had any desire to back out of hard labor, he felt that he had literally burned his bridges behind him.

Jack Hahn's father would break the field up for the small price of a dollar a day, and 'Lias thought it would cost him no more than two dollars anyway. Just where

he was to find the seed was another question. He did a large visiting among his older acquaintances for two or three weeks, interviewing about specialties in potatoes and the planting of them.

Old men who had never thought of him twice said that he was getting to be a likely boy, and various odd jobs fell into his hands.

He had a dollar put by that he had earned at Father's White's, but it was to pay for the ploughing.

One day he was at the Mills grocery, with the vexing problem in his mind of where was he to get potatoes to plant.

"See here, 'Lias," said Mr. Mills, "here's a man wants to trade off potatoes for work in a truck patch. Maybe that's your chance."

The man studied 'Lias. "I want a quick and careful hand, to rise early and work late."

“If Father White will let me off for two days I will try to please you, sir.” ’Lias spoke firmly.

“See about it quickly then ; I want to be leaving town in an hour.”

’Lias was forced to hurry as he had never done before. The lazy ’Lias rebelled and exclaimed, “What’s the use of all this flurry ? Mother’s not suffering. It’s just as easy to live poor as to try to be always pushing to make something.”

Then the new ’Lias would argue : “You are growing up, and you’re ignorant and poor. Your chances are all passing. If you don’t study you’ll be a dunce ; if you won’t work you’ll never be anything but poor.”

Father White thought it a good plan, and said some good words of encouragement to the boy.

“I’ll keep your place here for you,” he called after ’Lias.

As he sat in the farm wagon jolting along the rough country roads, he felt very little enthusiasm over his new venture. Mr. Blaudet, his employer, was brusque and overbearing. The weather was a little chill for April, and as soon as the farm was reached he was ordered to take out the horses, water them, feed them, and report for supper.

'Lias was unused to such work, and but for a negro pottering about the stable would have found it difficult to unharness the team and be ready by the time the bell clanged its call for supper.

The food was plentiful enough, but the boy missed his dainty dishes that his mother prepared so easily.

He could not eat much, and, rising, asked to be excused.

“Can't you eat our rations?” asked Blaudet roughly.

“I’m not hungry to-night,” answered ‘Lias.

“Go into the kitchen and be cuttin’ potatoes for to-morrow’s plantin’,” ordered his employer.

‘Lias shifted uneasily from foot to foot, his face flushed, and he looked appealingly at a Swede with a kind face who sat next him at supper. He raised his eyebrows interrogatively, rising at the same time.

“My appetite’s failed, too,” he said coolly. “One can’t eat much of such a rich repast.”

Some of the men laughed, but the others looked rigid; Blaudet frowned.

“Come on,” said Matthias to the boy; “there’s one time to do a thing here, and that’s all the time.”

In the kitchen were four barrels of potatoes.

“This is our pleasant little recreation before bedtime. When we’re through we can

sleep the sleep of the just. Don't know how? So I thought. Well, you've got a mighty few minutes to learn in. Blaudet will come out in no time. See," and he commenced with careful patience to show the weary boy how to cut the potatoes to please Blaudet.

"He splits them so," he explained. "That makes all the eyes on top in each piece. You'll be expected to put them just that way"—he laid the cut upon the floor—"when you're plantin' to-morrow."

'Lias gave it his best attention, and when Blaudet came out directly he looked sharply at the work, but said nothing.

From time to time Matthias would put his cuttings in 'Lias' measure, with an encouraging word or smile.

Presently the Swede looked up at Blaudet. 'Lias was fast asleep, with his head against his friend's knee.

Blaudet followed the look. He raised his foot to give him a push or kick, whichever his conscience called it, but the Swede interposed angrily.

“No you don’t,” he cried. “I’ll take his measure through,” he said.

Blaudet shrugged his shoulders. “The more fool you.”

The Swede lifted the boy, and with an inquiry as to where he was to sleep, he carried him off to his bed, removing his shoes and coat. A lamp glimmered late that night in the chilly kitchen; the lonely Matthias bent over his double task cheerfully.

’Lias was surprised to find himself already dressed in the morning, and he looked with horror at the dingy bedclothes and tumbled, untidy room.

“How can a body live this way?” he thought.

A bell rang sharply, and heavy steps sounded hurriedly up the creaking stairs.

“Tumble out!” cried Matthias. “You won’t have any time to wash your face. Hurry! The old man’s just rearing. Somebody left the cowlot gate open last night, and the cattle’s eat up a lot of his early cabbage. I tell you there’s fun in the air to-day.”

When they reached the table Blaudet was already eating savagely, as if the victuals were personal enemies, and he enjoyed chewing them up.

He glared from under his eyebrows at 'Lias, but said nothing.

Before 'Lias had time to drink his black coffee Blaudet pushed back his chair.

“Be in the fields by six-thirty,” he said coldly.

It was already a quarter-past six o'clock.

“That means us,” said Matthias, indi-

cating the few men at the table ; “ the teams have been out an hour.”

'Lias stumbled over the clods awkwardly, taking up his row with a regretful thought of his mother and Marilly over the pleasant breakfast-table.

“ I'll do it, though,” he muttered ; “ I'll not turn back now.”

The work went on silently, the men looking gloomy and sullen. There were no snatches of song nor exchanges of jokes.

Sometimes 'Lias found a half or a third of his row planted, and was puzzled until he saw a cheery glance in Matthias' eyes and a knowing nod.

“ Who is that boy yonder ?” he whispered to the Swede as they passed each other.

“ Blaudet's boy. A loving father, eh ?”

'Lias had been watching the thin, stooped boy whenever he could. His clothes were ragged, and he was barefooted, although he

was all of sixteen years of age. His large eyes, dark and clear, were filled with a pathetic look that made 'Lias very sad.

He tried to speak a kind word to him once, as they passed each other on the way to the house for dinner.

The boy smiled a strange smile that showed a clot of blood upon his lip.

“What done that?” asked 'Lias of the Swede.

“In the stables a bit ago his good father struck him with a bridle because he let a measure of oats fall.” Matthias growled something under his breath. “That boy'll die as his mother died last year, just drop dead at work. He hain't got strength now to stand.”

When 'Lias' two days' work was finished he had learned more about the rough side of life than he had ever expected to know.

He had learned, too, to have sympathy for

another's trouble without thinking of himself. He had seen Blaudet's son kicked until even 'Lias clinched his hands to restrain his fury. He had seen the boy driven from the table before he had half finished his meal.

"Why don't you big fellows keep him off that boy?" 'Lias asked one of the men.

"Our business is to earn our wages and not lose our place." The man frowned a little. "Why don't the boy cut and run?"

'Lias wondered about that, too. Surely the world was wide enough to hide in.

He delayed Val at the pump one day and said, "Why don't you run away from *him*?"

The boy answered coldly, without looking at him, "I will not leave my sister alone."

His sister? 'Lias had never regarded Marilly as a factor in his life, and he commenced a new train of reasoning. If Marilly

was here in Val's sister's place, and he was Val, would he think enough of her to stand so much abuse? He could not answer it satisfactorily, but it was the dawning of a new life for Marilly.

"My time's up," he said to Blaudet the evening after the second day. "I will see my potatoes measured out, and then I will start for home."

"In the morning, young man—in the morning; meanwhile fall to work oiling this harness to pay your night's keep."

'Lias had intended to walk in that night, but he made the best of it by having a word or so to say to Val, who was having a heavy chill.

"When you come in town come to see me. I have lots of things I want you to see."

"I can't," shivered Val; "father won't let me."

“Then I’ll walk out to see you.”

“Well,” was the cheerless answer.

The next morning he tumbled out early to find his potatoes sacked and waiting him.

Blaudet came around in an apparently cheerful humor.

“I’m going into town to-day, and I’ll haul you and them in for fifty cents.”

’Lias hesitated ; the sense that was slowly awakening told him to look at the potatoes. He opened a sack slowly, and, just as he expected, it was filled with imperfect potatoes, over half rotten—in fact, the refuse of Blaudet’s potato store.

“Mr. Blaudet,” ’Lias’ voice shook, and his face grew white, “I can’t take these potatoes for my work.”

“Yes, but you will !” thundered Blaudet.

“I will not,” said ’Lias firmly. “Come here, Matthias.”

The Swede came up with an insolent look at Blaudet.

“ I want you to hear that I will not accept these for my work, and I want you to see how rotten they are.”

He opened sack after sack, while Blaudet fumed.

“ You’ll take them,” he screamed at last, “ or you’ll get nothing !”

The boy paused and said wearily, “ I *can’t* take these.”

“ Fill these sacks with good potatoes, Blaudet ; I’ll help you.”

The Swede spoke with an air of command.

Blaudet turned on him furiously. “ ’Tend to your business, or I’ll——”

“ You’ll lend me the roan to ride to Millville ; his master’s looking for him, and it might——” He looked at Blaudet with smiling assurance.

The man's face turned ashy. He hesitated and said, "Do it yourself; I won't," and retreated.

The Swede shook his fist after him. "I had to say it, eh?"

"Now, sonny," he smiled consolingly at 'Lias, "we will just hurry these out and good ones in, and I will drive you to town. I guess I'll take a rest anyhow. Blaudet and me ain't close friends."

CHAPTER VI.

'LIAS FINDS LIFE A DREARY DREAM.

MATTHIAS and a man of Blaudet's drove into town together.

The Swede was very thoughtful all the way.

"You can just drive the team home," he said to the man. "Blaudet and me squared up yesterday, and if he let's me alone I'll let him alone."

"All right. I heard you and him had quarrelled this morning."

"Nothing serious."

Matthias looked over 'Lias' lot with a practical eye.

"I want to help you in with that," he

said. "If you'll let me stay here a week I'll get it in without a bit of worry."

'Lias consulted his mother.

"I guess as you've undertaken it, you might as well hurry," she said. "I don't see where he's to sleep, though."

Matthias was consulted.

"I can sleep in the kitchen on the floor, or, if you'll let me, I'll make me a cot."

Matthias went to work with great energy, and 'Lias reported to Father White.

"I can't go to school this term, Father ; it's only six weeks longer anyway, and my work is hurrying me."

"Now, 'Lias, it's those 'figures' that are troubling you ; own up, now," cried the priest, laughing.

'Lias looked confused.

"Not exactly, Father. I do dread arithmetic, but I have got so much work on hand."

“Let me see,” murmured Father White ;
“I have some spare time in the afternoons.
Suppose, now, you come up an hour or so
and study arithmetic under me.”

'Lias looked undecided.

“It would be the best for you. Then
when school begins you could start in feel-
ing more confident.”

“I will come, Father, but I must pay
for it some way.”

“There's my flowers to be cared for and
my kitchen garden to see to. Don't think
but I'll make you pay for it,” laughed
Father White.

Going home, he met the school-children re-
turning home for dinner.

'Lias was in the rough, clay-soiled shoes
and clothes he had worn in the country.
He did not know it, but his face held a
new strength that had never been there be-
fore ; his eyes looked a deeper blue, his face

was tanned, and much of the surplus fat he hated had disappeared. He walked rapidly and held himself erect. He looked very different from lazy 'Lias, the joke of the school.

He looked for the neat apron and straw hat that were so familiar to him. Presently he found them and Jennie walking demurely by Pauly Venty.

Now Pauly was the pink of neatness. His shoes were always polished to a glittering degree, his white duck suit immaculately clean, and his tie arranged to perfection. He had an aunt in the city who sent him his clothes, and Miss Blethins was a cousin.

How elegant he looks, thought 'Lias, his heart growing cold. The new blue-gray golf cap that Pauly wore set off his clear, dark complexion and his handsome eyes.

'Lias had intended to say a word or so to Jennie, but she raised her eyebrows just

the least bit when she looked at him, and Venty's eyes went over his attire with contemptuous coolness.

'Lias raised his hat and passed quickly.

Jennie said faintly, "Howdy, 'Lias?" and Pauly said nothing at all.

That closed in the day for 'Lias. There was no brightness anywhere. He hated the idea of the potato-field, and the stubborn, ever-present question of "What is your duty to-day?"

He wanted to creep away, to lie down and sleep always.

He came home with heavy, dragging feet. The Swede had much to tell him, but 'Lias would not listen. He went in by the kitchen stove and hung over its warmth as if he was very cold.

"You're havin' an ague chill, I'll vow," exclaimed Mrs. Leveve. "That comes of that trip out in the country."

“I guess I’ll get around,” murmured ’Lias drearily.

“I’ve got something you’ll like for dinner. I’ve opened a jar of the sweet pickles, the gherkins you always liked, you know.”

“I don’t want any dinner,” ’Lias answered.

He would not eat anything, but curled up on the Swede’s cot, and finally fell into an uneasy sleep, almost as languorous as that produced by drugs.

Here his old tormentor found him, and came jumping over the milking-stool to the side of the cot. True enough ’Lias had been thinking of him just before sleep overtook him, wishing there could be such things as fairies and fairy queens. He would have something then to outshine Pauly Venty.

Then Jack came and said: “Now hain’t that foolish, cryin’ about a mite of a girl like her. Dear, dear! There’s tastes and

tastes in this world. But I'll tell you something that will cheer you up. Venty is under suspicion in our realm. The queen suspects him of drowning cats and other serious misdemeanors. Besides, he ridicules "Mother Goose's Melodies," which is our book of by-laws. There's trouble ahead for him, I have no doubt."

"I don't like Venty," confided 'Lias.

"Everybody knows it," exclaimed Jack-be-Nimble frankly. "But you try to meet him pleasantly ; a little more air about yourself, can't you ? And can't you rub these shoes clean ?"

'Lias thought he could, and commenced at once, and Jack tried jumping over the squares in the kitchen carpet, singing :

" When I was a little boy
 My mother kept me in ;
Now I am a great boy,
 And fit to serve the king,"

until 'Lias had finished his task, when Jack asked suddenly :

“ You're digging up an old pleasure-ground of ours, but I suppose you know why ?”

“ I'm taking your advice of 'dig and delve.' ”

“ You'll profit by it, too.”

“ I don't care whether I do or not,” grumbled 'Lias.

“ Dear me !” exclaimed Jack, jumping backwards.

“ Crosspatch,
Draw the latch,
Sit by the fire and spin.
Take a cup,
And drink it up,
And call the neighbors in.”

'Lias was about to jump up and throw something at Jack's head, when his mother shook him, and said :

“ You've slept so long and heavy, I'm afraid you're going into a fever of some

sort. Jennie's been here and left you something, and she and Marilly's huntin' birds' nests in the peach-trees."

'Lias sprang up joyously. "Why, I must have slept three hours. Did Jennie see me? I'm glad she didn't. I felt so stupid and lazy this afternoon. I guess it came from losing so much sleep while I was at Blaudet's."

He scrubbed his face briskly, and laughed as he glossed his shoes, remembering Jack-be-Nimble. Then he slipped on his Sunday clothes and ran out after the girls.

He could not see them anywhere, although he went laughing about, peering into the blooming boughs and crying gayly, "You might as well give up, I'll find you." But there was no answer, and all the orchard seemed strangely silent, save for the hum of the bees among the pink blossoms.

"I dare say she's gone home," he thought,

feeling he had missed a rare afternoon, for Jennie's visits were events to Marilly and 'Lias.

Then he heard a faint cry, so far away he could not be sure, but it sounded like Marilly's voice.

"Marilly ! Marilly !" he shouted loudly, and stopped to listen.

He heard another cry, and it came from towards the creek. He ran through the lot calling to Matthias, who was at work in the ploughed ground :

"Did the girls pass here?"

"They went down to the pussy willows," answered the Swede carelessly.

"Come along !" cried 'Lias. "Something's happened. I'll bet they're at the Deep Pond."

Matthias became all action at once. His great strides took him over the ground rapidly, and the boy heard his exclamation of

horror just as he reached the fringe of willows. The next instant he saw Matthias lifting Jennie out of the water, where she sobbed and shook with fear.

“Where’s Marilly?” gasped ’Lias, his face turning white.

The Swede was taking off his coat and shoes. His face was calm and solemn.

“Don’t!” he said firmly, seeing the horror in ’Lias’ eyes; “I will find her.”

’Lias looked at Jennie.

“Where did she fall in?”

“Out of the bent willow,” sobbed the girl.

Like a flash the boy slipped into the water, but he was no match for Matthias, although he could swim and dive.

The third dive Matthias made he came up with the cold, seemingly lifeless little body.

“Life yet, life yet!” he called to ’Lias. “Run and have the doctor at the house.”

’Lias took one look at the freckled little

face he had found so aggravating many, many a time, and kissed it solemnly, then sped away.

“Come, and walk fast,” said the Swede to Jennie as he carried Marilly to the house.

In the face of real danger Mrs. Leveve had retained her presence of mind. Also she had been called upon to bring back to life several persons supposed to be drowned before to-day. By the time the doctor came Marilly was gazing unseeingly about, and Jennie was dry and warm.

“Marilly! Marilly!” said 'Lias coaxingly, putting his hot cheek against the cold little hand.

But she did not seem to know him, and the doctor shook his head.

“She's had a severe shock,” he said.

'Lias would not leave her until she said, after a long time, “Mother, what makes 'Lias cry?” Then he fell to laughing so

immoderately that his mother reproved him.

He went to the safe and hunted out the cup in which he hoarded his money, then he slipped out the back door.

He came back breathlessly.

“Who is it likes chocolate drops?” he whispered, leaning over Marilly.

“Me,” she said, “I think.” 'Lias poured the rich, brown lumps into her lap.

“Now I've got something for Jennie.”

He looked gravely at Jennie as he handed her a parcel and said :

“I'm not Pauly, but you will take this, won't you?”

“Oh, 'Lias,” murmured Jennie, “I came over to tell you something about Pauly. They're going to play a trick on you. When you plant your potatoes they're going to open Squire Black's pen and let the hogs out in your lot. You know it opens on your field.”

“They?” asked 'Lias. “Who else beside Pauly?”

Jennie's face flushed.

“A lot of the boys,” she answered; and then slowly, “Dupe is in it. Don't you tell, 'Lias—don't you tell that I said so.”

“You may be sure I'll not tell, Jennie; but thanks to you, I can guard the lot now.”

The news spread rapidly about Jennie and Marilly, and Mrs. Leveve was busy almost all the evening answering questions and going over details—now enlarged or now contracted, as the good woman's powers of fancy and speech dictated.

But all agreed that Matthias was a hero and a direct dispensation of Providence.

The next day Matthias and 'Lias planted potatoes until noon. Then the Swede worked alone in the afternoon, and 'Lias kept his appointment with Father White.

When he left an hour later he had gained

the first clear understanding he had ever known of fractions, a division of mathematics he considered especially useless and superfluous. Then he had seen Father White's herbarium. A wonderful thing to 'Lias. The priest went over it carefully, telling the history of a leaf he plucked near the grave of Robert Burns, or a bit of Eidelweiss and a little picture of the Alps pasted above. The boy felt how grand the priest's soul must be to give up the world to live in such a dreary place as Millville.

Father White read something of the wonder in the boy's face.

"Here are my ferns—ferns from everywhere, but I can tell you I've found some of my finest ferns right here around Millville. See that, and that, and this."

'Lias said he had never seen them, and the priest smiled.

"Because you have never observed, but

you are beginning to see ; then you will know what a storehouse Nature is, how lavish and yet how prudent of her behests. No churl can gather her treasures.”

’Lias went home with several new ideas, and he sat down by Marilly to talk about them.

“ We will make us a book, Marilly, and see how many specimens we can find. Won’t you like it ?”

“ I know where some of the loveliest ferns are !” exclaimed his sister.

It struck ’Lias unpleasantly again that Marilly seemed to have read and noticed so much more than he had.

“ I wish I had not idled so much of my time away,” he said.

“ You’re making up for lost time now,” laughed Marilly.

“ And I’ll never fall into sloth again.”

“ Jennie says all the folks are saying that

you're a real business boy. Mother is as proud as anything could be."

'Lias remembered something he must tell Matthias, and went out into the kitchen.

"We will have to watch that lot to-night; some of my school friends are going to turn in hogs upon it."

"Eh?" exclaimed the Swede.

"We will watch for them until ten or twelve o'clock; they won't come after that time," said 'Lias.

"Well," nodded the Swede, "I will surprise them."

CHAPTER VII.

THE BOYS FALL INTO A TRAP.

SQUIRE BLACK was a very taciturn, proud old man, who knew little of his neighbors and cared less for them. He refused to see visitors, and pottered about his house and work alone and silent. His wife had been dead for years, and a daughter had run away with a farm-hand some forty years ago, leaving the house as silent as the squire was. He had his whole mind and soul given to the girl, and those who remembered her said she was a perfect beauty, and that the money the old man gave her to dress with was something to be talked of.

But he was too careful to keep her from the associations of the village, and a hand-

some young farm-hand won her heart easily. The old man refused to have them about him, and the young fellow took up the cares of life with a stout heart, saying he had health, and he didn't want Squire Black's money. Then the wonderful Black Hills and their marvels of gold reached the remote village, and the young couple enthusiastically took up their household goods and trundled over the wild trail to the West.

Faint and uncertain news came of them now and then ; that there was a little girl born, then that the husband was dead, but no one knew for sure.

This was the man, Squire Black, whom all the town boys hated and feared, that owned the hogs in the pen back of 'Lias' lot.

"I'm going over to see Squire Black a minute," said the Swede.

"He won't see you," answered 'Lias.

Matthias knocked at the door, and then

discovering a rusty bell-knob, he rang it vigorously.

The door opened a little, and a tall, lean old woman said :

“What’s your business?”

“I want to see Squire Black.”

“He’s busy,” she answered, closing the door.

The Swede put his foot against the door.

“It’s about his hogs—it’s real business. I’ve got to see him. Tell him so.”

The old woman went down the hall grumbling, and Matthias stepped inside.

He was astonished to see how richly the hall was furnished, although everything was faded and dusty.

“Step in here,” said the old woman, coming back through the hall and shaking a door opposite him.

Finally it opened on whining hinges, and then the curtains were parted, the windows

raised and shutters opened, the woman grumbling all the time about the trouble.

Matthias looked about him, and he seemed much surprised over two portraits on the wall. One was of a young man, the other of a girl about ten years old. They were much alike.

“ *They* look like these pictures, I’ll swear, save these eyes are blue.”

Just then Squire Black came in much worried.

“ Why can’t you people let me alone, especially this late ?” he asked fretfully.

“ It’s your hogs, sir,” said Matthias respectfully. “ A little boy across here is trying to get in some potatoes for sale in the fall. His schoolmates have made a jest of it, and are going to turn your hogs into his patch to-night by opening a place in the back of the pen.” The squire’s eyes blazed.

“They’re always meddling — always. Can’t let me alone, although I don’t even buy my clothes here.”

“What awful eyes !” thought Matthias.

“Boys are useless things—devices of the Evil One, anyway.”

“‘Lias is not,” said the Swede stoutly. “The boy I’m helping, he works early and late, and troubles no one.”

“I *have* noticed him now and then,” amended the old man.

“I want you to help me about those boys,” continued Matthias. “They’re all afraid of you, and maybe you could think up a plan.”

“I ain’t used to staying up late,” objected the squire.

“They are your hogs,” answered Matthias firmly.

A slow, cruel smile lit up the old man’s face.

“There’s my dog, the worst one in the State,” he said.

The old man was eager now to see the boys caught, and leading out the dog, he had the Swede to make friends with him.

“I have no strength to hold him in leash, and you can do that. He’d kill them else.”

They concealed themselves in some shrubs near the pen, the squire wrapped in a huge coat and grumbling.

They did not wait long until several shadowy forms came, sometimes erect, sometimes stooping over the ploughed ground. A long, low whistle told that ’Lias was on hand, back of the field.

The Swede was about to loose the dog’s rope, but the old man put his hand out warningly. A slender form dropped over the fence, and the squire put his hand on the bristling dog to keep him quiet.

“Come back, Pauly,” whispered a voice.

“I want to look around here a bit before we let the hogs out. Come on,” answered the boy almost aloud.

One by one six boys came silently over the fence to his side.

“There’s a strawberry patch here somewhere ; I’m going to find it.”

Just then there came an ominous growl, and the dog leaped out. The Swede followed, and the squire called harshly :

“In an honest man’s yard again, are you ? But how will you get out ?”

Behind them were the dog, Matthias, and the squire. To the right and left were the thick, overgrown shrubberies, impossible to penetrate ; in front the brick wall and its locked gate.

Two or three of the boys were crying now, and Pauly Venty was shaking with fear.

“We didn’t mean to do any harm,” he muttered.

“Not to me,” said Squire Black ; “but how about that potato field ?”

“I told you we’d be found out, Pauly,” sobbed one of the smallest boys.

“Shut your mouth, Dupe !” exclaimed Pauly.

“Just remember, boys, whenever you want to visit me, that Watch here will be glad to see you. Now move on this way,” and he led them towards the house.

The boys did not want to enter the house, but the dog was behind them, and they saw no other chance. They were marched solemnly through the hall, out of the front door, and so to the street.

“Now, good-night, boys ; call earlier next time. I’ll take my dog now, sir, and can I see you in the morning ?”

Matthias was glad to be invited, and said so.

“It’s about that boy. There must be

something in him if all his neighbors are against him."

'Lias was out in the ploughed ground as the Swede came back.

"I heard the dog," he said. "I was afraid some one would be hurt."

"No ; just half scared to death," laughed Matthias.

"Did you see Squire Black?"

"Certainly." Matthias went on enthusiastically to describe his visit and its results.

'Lias laughed loudly at the boys being caught so neatly, and said :

"They won't try that any more."

"That Pauly, as you call him, is a pretty cool fellow. I guess he's used to being in trouble."

"He is a fighter," answered 'Lias. "I don't know much else about him."

"Well, our case is safe ; that's enough for us."

The next morning 'Lias went over the field, glad to know the planting was over, and hoping there would be a good crop.

"You're out early," said a gruff voice.

'Lias looked around hastily. He had never had a good look at Squire Black, but he was certain that this man could be no other.

"Yes, sir," he stammered.

"Do you like to work?"

"No, sir," blundered 'Lias.

Squire Black laughed derisively.

"You speak the truth about that, I dare say."

He went his way muttering, and 'Lias was left with his ears burning to think how silly he had talked.

Sometimes he felt so weary of striving to do right, when it was so much easier to do wrong. How he would like to try to whip Pauly Venty! But, then, what would Father

White say and his mother? They had told him how to suffer and be patient.

Then there were these potatoes. How he wished he could say, "I am not going to touch them." The work seemed never-ending.

Matthias was talking now of having to crush the clods, and later on of hoeing three times and ploughing twice. Tiresome work!

And mother and Marilly, why did they depend so much upon him? There was Star to bring from the pasture, the wood to carry, and the yard to keep clean, besides his other work at Father White's.

"I don't want to be good," he cried at last, "it's too much trouble."

Then these thoughts would give place to reflections of a better nature, and presently he would be whistling cheerily.

One night in June 'Lias sat on the old door-step, where he had dreamed so many

days away ; his thoughts were dreamy now, but of work to do and lessons to conquer.

Matthias, who had stayed on until he seemed a fixture, came and put his hand upon his arm.

“ I want to talk to you a minute,” he said.

They walked down the street until out of hearing, and the Swede asked :

“ Do you remember that boy and girl at Blandet’s ?”

“ I remember the boy ; I never more than glanced at his sister,” returned ’Lias.

“ They’ve run away.”

“ I’m glad of it,” answered the boy fervently.

’Lias looked about at the Swede, and commenced to tell him of the kicking he saw the boy get from Blandet.

The Swede interrupted him excitedly :

“ But they’re here. I hid them in the

barn. They're afraid, too, that old Blaudet is after them."

"He won't think of coming here."

"Yes, but he will ; he noticed you speaking to that boy, and that you pitied him."

"How can we manage?" cried 'Lias.

"You know what I think ? This I believe, that these children are akin to Squire Black. They look as like as peas, those pictures in the hall and those children. One day when we were out at Blaudet's the boy was cleaning up his trunk, and he showed me an old portrait. 'That's my grandmother,' he said. 'She was rich, but her father didn't like the way she married, and she went away and never came back. She is dead, and my grandfather, too.' "

Matthias went on to tell what he had learned from the boy.

"Blaudet is not his father. He died, and they were homeless, when, for the sake of

her children, the mother married Blaudet. He abused her until she died in about a year after."

"Does he know where these relatives lived?" asked 'Lias.

"I asked him that, but he did not know ; said his mother had some letters, but they were in Blaudet's desk, and he could never get at them. He remembers, though, to have heard her speak of her mother as being often in St. Louis."

'Lias started. "I suppose she would be if she was Squire Black's daughter."

"I am going to dare the old man's displeasure, and go there now to tell him all I suspect, and call on him in the name of charity to protect them. He wanted to help you, and you were too proud ; he can extend his charity to them. Don't you go to sleep until I come back."

"I'm too excited," answered the boy.

The Swede stayed so long that 'Lias almost despaired of him ever coming out, but finally he came quickly down the loose-planked old sidewalk.

“Be quick!” he cried to 'Lias. “Bring them before he changes his mind.”

They ran together to the little barn and called the frightened refugees.

“How I wish you had the letters belonging to your mother and grandmother!” exclaimed the Swede regretfully.

“I have them,” answered the girl. “They were ours, but I had to steal them.”

Matthias was overjoyed, and said if he was not fearfully mistaken these letters would establish their claims, or the claims he had made for them.

“That night I was there and saw the pictures, I said that old man was akin to you; and when I heard all about him I *knew* it was the truth, only the legal proof was ab-

sent. Now we will let him see these letters and papers for himself.”

When they reached the squire’s home the old gentleman was standing under a lamp in the hall, frowning and unbending, but ’Lias could tell that he was much agitated.

The boy went in first, slender and erect, the dark eyes still pathetic and harassed ; his face haggard and white, while his clothes were ragged and soiled.

His eyes met the old man’s unflinchingly. He had no idea why the Swede had brought him there, beyond the question of shelter and protection.

The squire started, and his hand shook.

“What do you call yourself?” he asked the boy harshly.

“Valentine Oliver,” answered the boy firmly.

The old man uttered an exclamation. The girl, who had stayed back near the Swede,

came forward slowly into the light. Her dark eyes were so like her brother's, and the curls falling over her thin white cheeks were only a little more girlish than his.

The squire seemed as if he was about to move towards her, then he said :

“ And who are you ? ”

“ I was named for my grandmother, sir, Olivia Black, and my last name is Oliver. ”

“ You know it all, and you have left me doubting ! ” cried the squire, turning towards Matthias.

“ I never even knew their names in full, ” said he solemnly, raising his hands.

Matthias spoke to the girl, and she gave him a small bundle of papers from out the folds of her dress.

'Lias stood inside the door, awkwardly shifting his hat from hand to hand.

Val looked at him. “ It was 'Lias that

gave me courage to run away and take my sister with me. He is younger than I am, but he was not afraid of Blaudet, and he was working for himself. When he asked me why I did not run away, the question stayed with me until I made up my mind to come here to his mother's and bring my sister. It was for her that I was afraid. Blaudet whipped her yesterday with the buggy whip."

The boy's eyes were blazing with horror and anger, but the girl had put her hands over her eyes, and the tears were dropping between the slender fingers.

The squire drew himself up, and his eyes were like the boy's, dark and angry.

"I will show him no mercy ; I'll——" He stopped quickly, as if he were afraid to say more.

The Swede gave him the letters.

"Here are letters belonging to their mother

and grandmother. I hope they will prove just what I expect them to be."

The old man took them into a large old-fashioned room. The aged woman whom Matthias had seen before was in a high-backed chair near the window. She looked about fretfully as the group entered, but when her gaze fell on Olivia she came stiffly to her feet and cried :

" Who is that, Mr. Val ?"

Something like a smile came across the old squire's face. " We will know presently ; we will see."

He unfolded letter after letter, sometimes frowning, but showing no sign that could give 'Lias or the Swede hope.

Val and his sister had sunk down in the soft seats provided for them by the old man, and they sighed contentedly as they looked about the room.

Suddenly the old squire came to his feet,

with his right hand clutching a yellowed letter. He shook it against the old woman's face.

“ This letter was written by my daughter, d'ye hear ?—my daughter Olivia.”

The woman looked startled, but she said :
“ You're a long-lived race.”

He took Val in his left arm and said :

“ I'm no hypocrite ; but my blood is my blood. Let him interfere who dares.” He kissed the children solemnly. “ You are my daughter's daughter's children, I am convinced, and this is your home.”

They could not understand at all, they were so astonished and perplexed ; but their great-grandfather insisted on taking a light and having them go into the room where the pictures were.

Val and Olivia stood under the pictures with curious eyes.

“That little girl looks like you, Ollie,” Val said to his sister.

“And *her* name was Olivia Black,” said the squire in a low voice—“your grandmother.”

“And that man looks like you will after awhile,” said the Swede to Val as they looked at the portrait beside the little girl.

“And that represents me, Valentine Black,” went on the squire in the same low voice. “I’m near eighty to-night, but I have never felt more that I had something to live for. What can I do for you?” He looked at ’Lias and the Swede. “You are too proud. I have tried this boy with money”—he put his hand kindly on ’Lias’ head—“but I know something he needs that shall be his to-morrow. I will have a talk with you,” he said to Matthias.

The two withdrew, leaving the squire to explain to the puzzled children, who did not

understand in the least what all the talk referred to, and could not believe that they were safe in a home of their own.

“I’ve been galloping around all over the world,” said Matthias meditatively, “but this is ahead of any romance I ever took part in. I feel like I was dreaming.”

“I have been dreaming of impossible happenings all *my* life,” laughed ’Lias; “but here is a wilder dream right at my door. I wonder if I won’t wake up in the morning and find myself the governor of the State.”

“In good time, if you try, and like the business,” cried Matthias joyfully. “Who could sleep to-night?” he said. “My blood is all a tingle.”

He and the boy sat down on the door-step at home looking at the beautiful moon that was creeping up the eastern sky.

The Swede put his head against the door and sang some old songs he had learned at

home. His voice was a clear tenor, and the songs were very pathetic.

'Lias sighed audibly. Matthias stopped and touched the boy's shoulder.

"What is it?" he asked.

'Lias put his head down on the kind arm.

"I wish I could be something," he said, sobbing—"something besides a stupid clod."

Matthias drew him closer.

"I have dreamed that, too," he said, his face brilliant, "and prayed for it, and what am I? A wanderer, a dreamer, and middle-aged."

CHAPTER VIII.

'LIAS LEAVES HOME, FOR SCHOOL.

THE Swede was sent for early next morning to come to Squire Black's.

In a little while he was on the way back to 'Lias with a present for him of two good farm horses, fitted with neat new harness.

"I don't like to take them. I haven't deserved them, and how can I thank him, anyway?" said 'Lias.

Matthias frowned. "He will be worse than mad if I have to lead them home to him."

Finally they were put in the stable, and 'Lias felt quite proud of his team.

Great was the excitement in the village when the fact was made public that Squire Black's children were of his own blood.

Blaudet made a great to do, but when he knew all, he was so amazed that he could not think of any immediate way to outwit the squire ; and when he was shown the statement of Val and Olivia concerning his cruel treatment, he was much alarmed, and wished to make a compromise of some sort.

As for Val and Olivia, they could not realize how completely their lives were changed. They came over in the evenings to visit 'Lias and Marilly, but they did not know how to play any games.

The squire liked 'Lias to come over to the old house, and often asked him what he intended to make of himself.

“ I don't know, sir. I have dreamed of being something beside a mere stupid creature like I have been, but I'm so slow to learn anything.”

“ Never dream,” exclaimed the squire ; “ determine to do, and ways will open for you.”

This was another new idea for 'Lias, and he acted upon it at once by asking Father White if there was any chance for him in arithmetic.

“Of course,” answered the priest. “You don’t know how much progress you have made. You will be surprised when school begins to find how much you understand.”

“I hope I’ll be up with Pauly Venty,” said 'Lias, more to himself than to Father White.

The priest smiled a little. “That’s a very natural wish, I know, but is it the incentive for preparing for examination? I must not be disappointed in my summer pupil. I’ve been furbishing up my rusted mathematical gifts all these days because of you.”

“It’s awfully good of you, Father,” answered 'Lias gratefully.

“And whenever I see the nice lettuce and other salads served upon my table, and know

you've cared for them, I think it's 'awfully good of you,' " answered he, laughing.

The Swede Matthias now proposed to Mrs. Leveve and 'Lias to plough up all the little land that belonged to her, about five acres in all, and plant clover to sell seed and hay from.

" Squire Black offers me ten acres to take on shares next year. If you can let me stay here, I can make enough at odd jobs to keep up a share in the provisions, and I will help here, too, while 'Lias is at school."

Mrs. Leveve agreed to this plan with pleasure. Matthias had made himself a necessity in the little home.

When school opened 'Lias was on hand early.

He was very much changed, and one or two of the boys pretended not to know him. He was taller and thinner ; his eyes had lost their sleepy look.

He had used some of his money to buy

a neat school suit. With a trim cadet cap and polished shoes he looked even better than Pauly Venty. Jennie was openly proud of him, and Dupe, her brother, attached himself to 'Lias with many expressions of friendship.

"You're awful sure that 'Lias is some," sneered Pauly to Jennie. "Just wait; anybody can dig potatoes or feed a horse."

Jennie felt anxious; she remembered how very dull 'Lias was.

When the bell rang and the children filed in 'Lias came in and bowed respectfully to Miss Blethins, the teacher.

She commenced an examination at once to grade her classes.

When the class was called in which Pauly Venty had ruled as of superior intelligence, 'Lias walked up, inwardly nervous, but outwardly calm.

"You've made a mistake, Leveve," said

Miss Blethins courteously. “ *You’re* in the second class.”

“ I would like to try to pass the examination for this class, if you please.” ’Lias spoke firmly, but his face was very red.

Miss Blethins looked surprised, and Pauly Venty, with several of his followers, pretended to see something very funny in ’Lias’ proposal, giggling and mouthing immoderately.

Pauly Venty was called to the board first, and then others were sent up. In an undertone the teacher commenced with ’Lias.

His readiness in replying and his accuracy pleased Miss Blethins. She gave him three of the most difficult problems to solve.

He went to the board confidently ; his place being next to Pauly Venty, that being the only one vacant.

Pauly tried to trouble him every way.

“ That’s wrong,” he whispered. “ You’re copying off mine.”

'Lias faced about, trembling. "Miss Blethins, may I change places with Dupe Lavelle?"

The teacher looked sharply at Pauly, and 'Lias was allowed to go.

"Best two out of three, Leveve," said Miss Blethins pleasantly.

Pauly Venty made a flourish around his examples, and came to the recitation bench.

His teacher looked over his work carefully. Pauly's eyes flashed when he saw the red chalk cross opposite each of the three, signifying that they were wrong.

As the pupils took their seats the red chalk was busy marking errors, until only six were left to continue in the advanced class. One of the six was 'Lias Leveve.

Miss Blethins expressed her surprise and pleasure.

"You have surely been studying through the vacation?" she said inquiringly.

“Yes, Miss Blethins ; I have been studying under Father White.”

“I wish *some* of the other boys had followed your example,” she said.

Several of the boys were very angry, and said many aggravating and annoying things in 'Lias' hearing.

“You'd better hush, he'll fight,” cautioned little Jack Hahn.

This was greeted with a loud laugh. The idea of 'Lias in a fight was new to them. The boy tried his best to keep up his studies and make friends with all the boys.

Sometimes he would fail utterly, then again he would be far ahead in all his classes.

The squire, whose contempt for the village people would not let him associate with them or allow Val and Olivia to do so, made an exception of 'Lias and Marilly. This made the gossips more talkative and the dissatisfied ones more surly.

These ills and many more did 'Lias confide to Father White—his only relief. Wisely the priest counselled, and faithfully the boy tried to keep his teachings.

The potatoes turned out so well under the Swede's careful management, that 'Lias cleared thirty dollars, even paying Matthias a reasonable wage fee.

After buying an overcoat and a pair of gloves, he gave the money to his mother, who proudly acknowledged how much help he had been to her for several months.

After school closed the next year Father White disturbed Mrs. Leveve's serenity of mind by saying that 'Lias must be put into a more thorough school.

"There's a fine school in Lebonne," he continued. "A cousin of mine is parish priest there, and 'Lias could stay with him. I've already asked him about it."

"It isn't worth while," complained Mrs.

Leveve ; "'Lias never took to school-in'."

"Because he was overfed, untrained, and never aroused until last spring," urged the priest.

"I will talk to him," she said doubtfully.

"I won't consent just yet."

Father White smiled ; he knew how easily 'Lias managed to argue away his mother's objection to any plan he liked.

When 'Lias was told of it, "I am fourteen," he mused. "There is little time left for me to prepare myself, so I will go. I want to see Squire Black first, though."

One pleasant afternoon he told the squire of the course marked out for him.

"A good idea !" exclaimed the old man. "I will have Val go with you. He must be in school. Will you like *that* ?

"Yes, *sir* !" cried the two boys.

"But it looks selfish in me to leave Marilly

and mother all alone ; besides, my sister is just crazy to take lessons in music."

"I will see they don't suffer," the old man said earnestly. "Your sister and Olivia can study music together, for I have already engaged a teacher from Clinton to take charge of her. I shall be more than glad to have your sister come here."

One day, the first of the following September, 'Lias kissed his mother and sister good-by, and started for Lebonne.

Father White and Matthias went with him to the nearest railroad station. The priest was in the very best of spirits.

"Now be a good boy," he admonished ; "and remember, I expect you to make a great man of yourself. Come back to your native town and legislate a continuance of this railway to Millville."

There was a general laugh, and 'Lias and Val were off.

There was no doubt now of the boy's earnestness. He studied and worked as he had never done. "I never dream now," he said to Val one day. "I used to have the queerest dreams about old fairy characters; you'd not believe me if I'd tell you."

Then there came a short and awful letter from Father White. 'Lias' mother was dead of small-pox. It was supposed she contracted the terrible malady from some women who made the rounds of country towns with cheap wares. One of these had died in an old cabin near town, and the other was slowly recovering.

"This is all I can send you now. No communications will pass after to-morrow. Your sister is with the Blacks and safe, as their house is isolated. I was with your mother at the last; she died happy, leaving her love and blessing to her children."

A few wise words of help and counsel, then

the letter closed ; and not many weeks after the kind old priest cheerfully laid down his cross, to enter on his eternal reward.

For weeks 'Lias seemed lifeless. He crept about seeing nothing, caring for nothing. Father Clarke tried to lead him towards the altar of the Mother of Sorrows, but there was no relief anywhere for him.

The Lenten season was near its close, and preparations were made for a grand Easter celebration. It was something new to 'Lias, and he liked to watch the decorators at their work.

He was to have been one of the acolytes, but Father Clarke felt his grief was too near vital, and so it happened that 'Lias sat back under the choir loft on Easter Sunday. He started abruptly when the great organ pealed forth its sounds of exultation, and when the choir sang the triumphant hymns of Christ risen, he sobbed aloud.

It relieved him, and when he met Father Clarke in the parlor after Mass, he looked more like himself.

“ I’ve been very selfish, Father.”

“ There, there,” said the priest. “ See how close suffering brings us to Our Lord !”

“ I wanted so much to make something of myself, so mother could know.”

“ And will she not ? Think of her as seeing and rejoicing.”

“ I had not remembered that,” murmured ‘Lias.

“ Then there is your sister to care for and watch over. Think how poor her life is without you, and mourning for a mother, too.”

“ I’ve been worse than selfish, Father,” cried ‘Lias.

CHAPTER IX.

'LIAS VISITS HOME ONCE MORE.

WHEN school closed 'Lias visited home. The house was closed, and everything looked desolate. Matthias slept in the house, and took his meals with the Blacks. The old man seemed to rely upon him more and more.

'Lias sat down upon the old stone step, and Turk crept up to put his head upon his young master's knee.

“ We're just a-dreaming, Turk. We will wake up and find mother and all waiting supper, just as they used to be.”

He broke down and cried bitterly, while Turk tried in vain to make him notice his game of fetch and carry.

“I feel so unreal,” he said to Matthias ;
“I don’t feel at home.”

“Have you seen Marilly ?” asked the Swede.

“No ; I am going over now. I wanted to see home alone, so as to be used to not seeing mother here.” His eyes grew dim with tears.

“You’ll think Marilly changed,” said Matthias. “She is two years older than you.”

“So she is !” exclaimed ‘Lias. “She must be seventeen.”

He had left his sister a freckle-faced little girl in short dresses, but when she came down the steps to meet her brother, she was in a mourning dress that touched her toes.

How tall and self-possessed she seemed ! Her fair face and blue eyes looked troubled, but she would not speak of their loss often.

“I can’t stay here always,” she said, in answer to ‘Lias’ question of how they would better manage. “And the squire says I

ought not to interfere with your career. Matthias took care of mother while she was sick. He had the small-pox once, and she made him promise to take care of me. In fact, we think—the squire thinks, we might better marry and settle down in the old house. I want to.” She drew a long breath. “I never cared to leave it. With my music and all the old flowers, and—and Matthias, I can be happy again.”

“And what am I to do, alone and homeless?” asked 'Lias bitterly.

His sister put her arm around his neck.

“Never alone,” she said softly, “while Turk and I live.”

'Lias put his head against her shoulder and sobbed out all his fears and troubles.

Marilly was practical and hopeful. She never dreamed. She comforted 'Lias as only one other could do, and that was his mother.

“The home will be yours and mine,” she

said. "I will keep your room always for you."

'Lias talked it over the next day with the squire, who told him that he had satisfied himself that Matthias was an honorable and worthy man.

Before 'Lias returned to school there was a quiet wedding at Squire Black's, and Matthias and Marilly made their wedding journey by walking over to the old house and taking possession. They had a quiet supper, and Marilly and Olivia were quite merry, but 'Lias felt sad and unreal, while Matthias understood him too well to feel hurt.

The boy visited the house where Father White had lived. There was a new priest he knew, a kind, young-faced man, whom 'Lias liked. The priest took him about over the familiar garden and flower-beds.

"Father White left you a little gift; you were to have it when you came."

He handed the boy the herbarium and a few other books that Father White had prized. The boy took them silently, the tears dropping down upon the books.

“ Father Downs, I’m so worried about my sister. She was married yesterday, but not by a priest. She and Matthias are both Catholics at heart ; they’re just careless. Yesterday I felt I ought not to say anything, but to-day I feel uneasy about it.”

Father Downs nodded his head cheerfully.

“ Father White said you were a very conscientious boy. Rest about your sister ; I will visit her and her husband. Tell me of yourself.”

“ I will finish my school course, then I will try to get into some business in Lebonne. I like the place. Val is to enter a bank there, and I will either teach or enter with him.”

“ But you had an ambition ?” queried the priest.

“ I have yet—to do well anything I find to do,” answered 'Lias. “ But I do want to do something else ; I can't talk of it yet.”

The next summer 'Lias did not visit Marilly. He worked in a store and studied at night, attending chapel regularly on Sundays.

Time passed rapidly, and one day 'Lias was made aware of its flight when he thought, “ I am twenty-one years old to-day.”

He had worked steadily during vacations, while Matthias had insisted on giving him a third of whatever was realized on the little farm.

He had quite a sum to his credit in bank, and to-day had brought him a letter bidding him to be present at the reading of Squire Black's will.

'Lias knew his old friend was dead, and that Matthias had been appointed as guardian of Val and Olivia. They were of age now, and the will was to be read.

Various bequests were made. Olivia was to be sent to New York to school. Val was already in business in Lebonne. His sister was recommended to his care; and finally 'Lias heard his name mentioned.

The squire had given him the hall and the valuable farm back of it.

He could hardly realize it.

“It's true,” said Val smilingly. “Olivia and I could not own it together very well, and grandfather thought you'd come back here some day to live, maybe represent the county, or be governor or something.” Val laughed pleasantly.

Then there came a busy life. He was interested in a bank in Lebonne, his farm claimed much time, and the years passed like dreams. He had been interested in politics of late, and had thought of Matthias as a sturdy man of the people.

He still had a room at the priest's house--

it seemed more home-like. 'Lias came singing into his room one day, when Father Clarke called across the hall :

“ What have you been doing to be talked of in the papers ?”

'Lias looked surprised. The priest handed him the daily paper.

He saw dimly in large type the name “ Elias Leveve,” then a request that he should allow the people to place his name on the ticket for representative. There was a long list of names, and 'Lias saw that Paul Venty's name was in the list, as well as Dupré Lavelle.

“ I must go down there,” he murmured, his heart warming towards all the old friends, and he forgave at once many a slight in the past—“ I must go home and shake hands with all of them.”

So he journeyed down to Millville to see his constituents. The news of his coming

had travelled on before him, and the village band with a large crowd was at the station to meet him.

He was cheered and cheered. He made a speech that no one heard, and a trim little woman in white swiss and a picture hat handed him a bouquet of roses. How home-like they were—all old-time garden roses! He lifted his hat and looked at the giver.

“Why,” he stammered, “it’s Jennie.”

Then there was another cheer when 'Lias elbowed his way through the crowd to shake hands with Father Downs.

“How do you like this, 'Lias?” asked Marilly, as she stood in the door at home bidding 'Lias good-night. “Doesn’t this equal your wildest dream of the future?”

“It’s a dream itself,” declared 'Lias. “I’m just an heir of dreams.”

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